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**REMAINS**  
**OF**  
**ALEXANDER KNOX, ESQ.**

**VOL. I.**



**LONDON :**  
**Printed by A. SPOTTISWOODE,**  
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Univ. of  
California





Alexander Innes, Esq.  
From a Bust by Chantrey.

London, L. Linnell, 27, Paternoster Row, Decr. 1874.

REMAINS

OF

ALEXANDER KNOX, ESQ.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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THE  
PROPERTY OF  
THE  
BIBLIOTHEQUE  
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DE  
PARIS

LONDON:

JAMES DUNCAN, 37. PATERNOSTER-ROW;  
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"I meet with much fewer than I could wish, who search the Scriptures for these things,—such as unheeded prophecies, overlooked mysteries, and strange harmonies;—which being clearly and judiciously proposed, may make that book appear worthy of the high extraction it challenges, and, consequently, of the veneration of considering men; and who are solicitous to discern and make out, in the way of governing and of saving men revealed by God, so excellent an economy, and such deep contrivances, and wise dispensations, as may bring credit to religion; not so much as it is Roman, or Protestant, or Socinian, but as it is Christian."

BOYLE: *Excellency of Theology.*

"I am confident that the New Testament, rightly understood, would harmonize all dissonances, and bring the Christian church, not only 'with one heart,' but 'with one mouth,' to glorify God: And, the more I read and endeavour to study it in its own incomparable language, the more I am satisfied that there is an organic scheme of truth running through every part of it, which it will be yet granted to faithful Christians to enter into and become possessed of, and thereby to attain, not only 'the unity of the faith,' but also the unity 'of the knowledge' of the Son of God."—*Unpublished Letter of Mr. KNOX.*

TO THE  
REVEREND  
FATHERS OF THE  
CONGREGATION

*afw*

## EDITOR'S PREFACE.

---

IT may be necessary to premise, that these volumes contain papers, all of which are, — more or less, — in an unfinished state ; not one of them having been left, or prepared, by Mr. Knox, expressly for publication. They were intrusted, however, unconditionally, to one, who, well aware of the writer's design that his ideas should, one day, be communicated to the world, has deemed it a duty now to give them to the public. All that is published is, almost precisely, as it was left : there have been no omissions, except of passages that had some strictly personal reference of a private nature ; nor any alterations but such as are merely grammatical, — the very few which were necessary to correct verbal inaccuracies of a rapid writer, pouring out the matter of a full and ardent, though a mature and practised mind.

Mr. Knox, in these writings, speaks on subjects of the weightiest importance, and of the most kindling interest. His ideas are, often, very original ; though always, it is believed, in consent with the spirit of Christian antiquity. In the least studied of his expressions, he is seldom harsh ; and in his least finished arguments never unintelligible. With a due degree of attention, his meaning will, seldom, be miscon-

ceived ; where any thing is obscure, there has been no attempt to make it clearer ; his sentiments stand, in every instance, in his own words ; the most characteristic qualities of his writings are seen, in these volumes, unimproved and uninjured. His mind was one of those, which, in their superior elevation and enlargement, stand alone : it has been suffered here to show itself singly and prominently.

That there is no error in these writings, it would be too much, even for partiality, to presume : to say that there is no defect, would be to say that they are not human : but, that they contain as high and as deep a range of thought, as any in which enlightened reason has expatiated under the guidance of the inspired word,—that the piety which animates them is as pure and warm, and the genius that shines through them as bright and radiant as in any writings of modern times, is a sentiment which it is not hazardous to avow in the ears of those who can feel and understand, and are competent to pronounce upon them.

Some shades of difference in Mr. Knox's views, some changes of opinion, there may (one would almost say there must) be found in these volumes. It is in the nature of things to suppose this. They contain the thoughts of one speaking, at various intervals, through a long series of years ; often on some of the most abstruse points of controversial theology. But it is believed that the discrepancies are not greater than will naturally—(it may, perhaps, be said necessarily)—exist in the variations of a mind which, always, thought for itself ; and which, whenever it recurred



to a subject of former search, recurred to it with the freedom and freshness of originality. The differences between Mr. Knox's modes of expressing himself on any given topic, at one period of his life and at another, cannot be better stated than in his own words, as they occur Vol. I. p. 166. It is thus, that, from the fulness of unbosoming confidence, he is led to speak incidentally of himself, and of his mental habits, to a friend, to whom he is sending his thoughts on a subject of some intricacy and depth; of which he retained not the record of a rough draft, or copy. "I should have  
" been very sorry you had not consulted your own  
" convenience in the matter of returning the letter.  
" I have been only solicitous that it should not be  
" lost, as my thoughts, when once registered, on  
" any subject of importance, become valuable to me,  
" were it only that I may know what I did think  
" on such a point, at that time. From some such  
" records I am able to ascertain to myself, that—  
" though I have been as busy a thinker as most  
" people—my mind has always adhered to the same  
" radical principles; and that changes in me have  
" been circumstantial, or merely progressive; I  
" should also say, perhaps, expansive. But, cer-  
" tainly, on no essential point, do I seem to myself  
" to have veered about, from the age of eighteen to  
" the present hour. My conduct varied much from  
" that time until I was thirty-nine; but not my prin-  
" ciples: and, yet, I was ever, I believe, open to  
" conviction, and ready to have embraced whatever  
" could have been proved true.

“ Doubtless, many thoughts have presented, and  
“ are still presenting themselves to my mind, which  
“ once I had no idea of. But these, in, I believe,  
“ every instance, are as much the growth of former  
“ rooted principles, as multiplied branches grow from  
“ one and the same main stem. Of such an inward ve-  
“ getation I am always conscious ; and I equally seem  
“ to myself to perceive the novelty of the fresh shoot,  
“ and its connexion with what had been produced  
“ before. I presume other minds would have the  
“ same tendency, if full room were left for it.”

Mr. Knox's mind was, providentially, placed amidst circumstances peculiarly favourable to this mental germination ; and it was a mind of more than ordinarily vigorous tendency to ramify and expand.

It may be thought that some things are brought forward in a form too unfinished for the public eye. But it should be considered that a thought, as it first rises in a mind of powerful conception, has often more of the living energy of truth, than when it has been shaped into more exact proportions by the line and rule of severer judgment. It is, in all cases, more characteristic of the qualities of the soil in which it springs ; the flavour of the grape is best exhibited in the first unforced distillation. Nothing that fell from Mr. Knox's mind was void of beauty or use : it was said of Bishop Pearson, that “ his very dust was “ gold ;” it may be asserted of Mr. Knox, that his least digested thoughts are precious. And (in the words of one who was well authorized to pronounce), “ perhaps very often, what, to our imperfect judgment,

“ may seem erroneous, may, at a future day, appear —  
“ (to use Mr. Knox’s favourite allusion to Tully) —  
“ among the ‘ *judicia naturæ* ;’ or, yet more, among  
“ the ‘ *ecclesiæ judicia.*’ ”

Of the Author, personally, it has not been thought necessary to say much : but a word must be said. With every qualification for a distinguished career in public life,—the life of politics \*, in which, for a time, he actively engaged,—at the very moment when the prospects which that life presented, opened on him in their fairest views, his choice was made for a more immediate service of God, in the cultivation of revealed truth ; for the dissemination of which he was eminently fitted, not more by the powers of his pen, than by the unrivalled charm of his conversation. There are few who will read the following passage — Vol. I. p. 167.—without some emotion of sympathy : there are none with whom these works shall find acceptance, who will not cordially rejoice at the choice so made and maintained.

“ In me a series of providential circumstances, for  
“ which I have infinite cause to be thankful, has  
“ favoured the growth—(of that inward mental  
“ vegetation, which he has, before, mentioned)—in a  
“ peculiar manner ; it being my lot to have no rival  
“ object ; and it being the good pleasure of God to  
“ spare no pains in breaking up and bettering the

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\* Mr. Knox was private Secretary to Lord Castlereagh, for some years previous to the Union of Great Britain and Ireland, in the year 1800. He was then urged by that nobleman to embrace the offer of being brought into the Parliament of the United Kingdom, as the representative of his native city of Derry, and to continue still in Lord Castlereagh’s confidence and counsels.

“ground of my heart and mind. In fact, no one  
“can owe more to the great Husbandman than my-  
“self. And, most certainly, I would not exchange  
“the mental garden with which he has been pleased  
“to enrich me, for any, or all, the delights of the  
“Eden of our first Parents. I am aware that an  
“honest looker-on might think it right to warn me  
“against being too much pleased with the branches  
“and the foliage, so as not sufficiently to look for  
“fruit: but, I humbly hope, such a censure would  
“arise from the truth of the case not being sufficiently  
“apprehended; and that, in fact, if the fruit were  
“not there also, my satisfaction would be very small.  
“Besides, though the leaves of the Tree of *Know-*  
“*ledge* serve, too often, still, for a covering to the  
“Serpent, the Tree of *Life* has its *leaves* too; and  
“even these *leaves* are ‘for the healing of the na-  
“‘tions.’ It is *this* tree, most assuredly, that I wish  
“to cultivate; for, —as far as my own weakness has  
“allowed, — I have, already, found in it all *that*  
“united, which made the olive tree, the fig tree, and  
“the vine, in Jotham’s parable, refuse to go to be  
“promoted over the trees. I seem to myself to have  
“made something of a like refusal, in turning away  
“from political life, and choosing my present retired  
“course. And, as I have never yet, so, I believe  
“assuredly, I never shall wish to recall that pre-  
“ference.”

The literary world is, already, in some measure,  
acquainted with the character of Mr. Knox’s mind,  
from the recent publication of two volumes of the



Correspondence between him and the late amiable and eminent Bishop of Limerick. It is not the intention of the Editor of the present work, to characterise him in any other way than as he presents himself to the world in these his writings. To that world it matters not how much he was admired and revered by those (and they were many of the wise and good) whom he numbered among his friends. It matters not how cordially (and he valued it above all earthly possessions) he was beloved by the select few, who were the objects of his tenderest and most ardent, his deep and constant affections. Such topics might be fit matter for a personal memoir, or as accompaniments to a publication of his general correspondence, should it ever appear. They are out of place here : it is the truth of his sentiments, and the vigour and beauty of his expressions, that must recommend them to men's minds and tastes. He speaks, now, as from the dead ; with the weight which his words derive from their intrinsic value. That weight, on one side or other of the balance, cannot but be great : there is nothing indifferent in the character of the subjects of which he treats : they embrace practical points, of vital importance to the happiness of men, in this life, and in that which is to come. Our concern is to examine them, without any reference to individual prejudices or partialities.

It is not even of great importance to others to know (though it was inestimably precious to him to experience), that to the latest hours of his existence, the truths of that gospel, in whose field his intellect

delighted to expatiate and enlarge, were experimentally tasted, felt, and enjoyed, as "the power of "God unto salvation:" that, amidst pain and languor, in the tremors of nervous weakness, and the partial obscurations of the mind's comfort by bodily disease, he was enabled uninterruptedly to hold fast the spiritual hope, which, on Christian principles, he had embraced; and to maintain, in the confidence of a present divine aid, that interior "peace of God "which passeth all understanding." It was his lot, (it may be, for the humiliation, and greater ultimate security, of an extraordinarily gifted spirit,) to walk often in the shaded valley, and to pass through the thick cloud.\* But he never walked alone, and never unfriended. His course, even when not in sunshine, was onwards, and in the direction of the light. Nor was there any sentiment which he more invariably maintained, (the truth of which, to his great comfort, God permitted him habitually to experience,) than that "the path of the just is as the shining light, "which shineth more and more, unto the perfect day."

How far he realized this, may, in some degree, be judged from a few extracts, with which the editor will close this very brief and imperfect notice. They are taken from amidst a multitude of others of like character and expression, in letters to a confidential

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\* It is almost needless to say that there is no disagreement between this statement and Mr. Knox's subsequent declaration that he had "an *unclouded* apprehension of the *great and good* God." The spiritually-minded and reflective reader well knows how to reconcile the apparent contradiction: he looks to the distinction between the views of the carnal and the spiritual mind. The low grounds of *nature* may be often obscured by vapours, while the elevated mountain of *faith*, ascending into a region that is above the clouds, has the sun upon its summit and sides; — the heavens clear, and the earth enlightened.

friend, to whom the very secrets of his heart were unreservedly disclosed. Written, as they are, at various dates from 1823 to 1831, they indicate correctly his habitual feelings during the closing years of his career, including that which was the last of his mortal existence.

The whole tenour of Mr. Knox's writings is evidence, that, for the ground of man's hope and trust, he looked to Christ as "all in all;"—that he confided in him as the "one Mediator between God and man,"—"the way, the truth, and the life;"—as the incarnate God,—the living, suffering, crucified, dying,—but, above all, the risen, ascended, glorified, and omnipotent Saviour. It is thus that, in the following extracts, he expresses the mode of his dependence on that redeeming and sanctifying Saviour; and the evidences within himself, which certified that "full assurance of faith," on which he rested with real and solid comfort.

"I am now," he writes, "declining into the vale of life; indeed, I am fairly in it. What, then, should I do for support to my sinking nature, for establishment of my spirit against the growing weakness of my body, if, in the greatest of all concerns, I had a doubt of the line I had taken, or the ground on which I stand? *Satisfaction* in this great business can only arise radically from conscious rectitude of heart, produced in us through the influences of divine grace. But this is not enough for a mind in full operation; I mean, one that reasons, as well as feels. There must be satis-

“faction to the understanding, as well as to the con-  
“science, in order to make even the path through life  
“safe and comfortable ; and, still more, to cheer our  
“hearts ‘in the dark and cloudy day’ which is ap-  
“proaching.”

Again : — “What I would particularly hope, is,  
“that I have been led in a peculiarly unembarassing  
“path ; my whole solicitude being centred in the re-  
“ligion of the heart. I cannot but think that the  
“pursuing of this object alone, may be helpful to  
“the steadiness, no less than to the cheerfulness of  
“the course. I humbly trust, also, that it is an  
“invaluable blessing to have an *unclouded* apprehen-  
“sion of the *great and good God*.”

At a later period, and in an illness of a peculiarly distressing nature, he writes thus : — “A night  
“without sleep is, certainly, not a pleasant thing :  
“but even the transient slumbers which I had to-  
“wards morning (though, probably, the longest did  
“not last fifteen minutes), made a mighty difference.  
“And, also, I could not but compare my state with  
“that of those whom racking pain kept awake : and  
“I felt how thankful I should be that it was no  
“worse. I was too unwell to think with continued  
“connexion : but it is happy for the weak, that *that*  
“is not necessary to our thinking comfortably. That  
“is the most comfortable thought, which has, in it,  
“most of the ‘*Sursum corda !*’ God, in the book  
“of Job, is said to ‘give songs in the night :’ he  
“does so, in proportion as he attracts the winged  
“heart to himself ; for, then, like the lark, it sings  
“as it rises.”

Once more : — “ Notwithstanding all I feel, I am  
“ sensible that nervous distress is a, comparatively,  
“ light affliction. I have no doubt that divine  
“ wisdom saw some kind of corporeal discipline to be  
“ indispensable for me : and I cannot conceive how  
“ any thing of this kind could have been more easy  
“ to endure, or more mingled with mercy, than that  
“ to which I am subjected.”

And finally : — “ Whatever be the amount of my  
“ trial, if God be pleased to make it the means of  
“ good to me, I shall have cause to be inexpressibly  
“ thankful. Hitherto, I have been trained, I think,  
“ by successive instances of discipline, without  
“ which I might never have known true happiness.  
“ And I have not doubted, that some fresh exercises  
“ of the same kind of mercy might be necessary, as  
“ tending to still deeper radication ; of which I could  
“ not but feel the want, while I hoped I desired it  
“ with sincerity. Perhaps what I am now suffering  
“ (it does not, however, deserve the name ; for,  
“ hitherto, God has dealt gently and graciously with  
“ me), may serve to promote that infinitely valuable  
“ object : for, I see enough, and have felt enough, to  
“ teach me what an unutterable blessing it must be, to  
“ attain that which is described in Ephes. iii. 16, 17.

“ The human heart is, naturally, sluggish : and,  
“ even in outward things, it is by necessity that man  
“ is forced to activity. It is much more the case in  
“ what concerns the immortal spirit ; ‘ the cor-  
“ ruptible body presseth down the incorruptible  
“ ‘ soul ;’ and there is too great a disposition to yield

“ to the pressure, until some felt necessity compels  
“ the resistance. But this is the least part of the  
“ hinderance : the tendency we have to be engaged  
“ by the present life, to cleave too dependently to  
“ persons and things (which it is right to value and  
“ love ; but *subordinately*, and *soberly*) ; this dispo-  
“ sition, I say, is a still worse thing ; and, yet, may  
“ be quite beyond our own correction. What, there-  
“ fore, we cannot do for ourselves, God himself may  
“ be pleased to do for us ; and our wisdom, as well as  
“ duty, is, to commit ourselves to his management ;  
“ and duly to appreciate the *anodynes* which he kindly  
“ mingles with the more painful parts of the process.  
“ I trust I have had repeated reason for gratitude of  
“ the deepest kind, on this very account, during the  
“ present indisposition : and I certainly receive new  
“ lessons from it of the importance of living in the  
“ *spirit of prayer* in ordinary circumstances. When,  
“ through divine grace, we are thus kept in daily  
“ and hourly intercourse of the heart with God, this  
“ blessed habit grows, as it were of itself, more in-  
“ tense and deep in the time of trial : and the sup-  
“ port, which, I trust, is thus brought, through  
“ divine mercy, from above, is *a rock which cannot*  
“ *be shaken.*”

On this rock, assuredly, Mr. Knox built “ the  
“ house” of his support: and he built it safe ; “ when  
“ the floods came, it fell not.”

The editor has, now, only to dismiss these volumes  
with the expression of his sense of obligation to  
those friends, whose assistance has supplied that por-



tion of his office, which he was ill qualified to discharge : friends, whom, — without their permission, — he will not name ; but whom he is anxious thus to assure, that he deeply feels the kindness and value of their services. The press has been superintended and corrected by one, who might well have pleaded over-engagement of a like kind, if, with him, any plea could be available against those of living friendship and a pious reverence for the dead. By another (whose residence in Oxford, his critical acquaintance with the writers of Christian antiquity, and his intimate knowledge of Mr. Knox's mind, fitted him eminently for the office), the quotations from the fathers have been carefully collated with the best editions ; and the sense of the originals has been correctly rendered, in the spirit of that context in which the extracts appear. To both these gentlemen an expression of gratitude is due : it is here sincerely offered, in the assurance that it will be cordially accepted.

To his publisher, Mr. Duncan, the editor feels 't a debt of justice, which he gladly pays, to avow himself under every obligation which can be conferred by attention the most exact, and compliance the most obliging. As a man of business, his punctuality has left nothing to wish : and his feelings and conduct, in every communication, from first to last, have, in all instances, been the most liberal, enlarged, and gentlemanlike.

*Bellevue, June 24th, 1834.*

## ERRATA.

### VOL. I.

- Page 16. last line of note, for "them all" read "her fall."  
28. line 13. from bottom, between "the" and "image" insert "same."  
53. l. 13. for "Sylla" read "Scylla."  
190. l. 7. from bottom, for "a" read "and."  
247. l. 13. from bottom, for "writers" read "tenets."  
316. l. 2. from the bottom of text, for "viribus" read "verbis."  
352. l. 2. for "deoque" read "ideoque."  
382. l. 19. before "Timothy" dele "St."

### VOL. II.

- Page 105. line 14. from bottom, for "moral" read "whole."  
108. l. 15. for "second" read "sacred."  
123. in the note, for *θησω* read *φησιν*.  
127. l. 6. from the bottom, for "opportunity" read "opponents."  
272. l. 7. after "as" insert "well as."

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Univ. of  
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ON CHRISTIANITY, AS THE WAY OF PEACE AND  
TRUE HAPPINESS.

January 2. 1805.

MY DEAR ———,

**I** WISHED to have seen you again, before you left Dublin.

I hope and trust that, if any thing, in my last conversation, appeared exceptionable, it was in manner and expression only, and not in the substance of my sentiments.

I am unconscious of holding any principle, in which all the most enlightened of the Catholic church do not agree with me, except that I, probably, think a state of uniform victory attainable here; which the followers of St. Austin, whether Romanists or Protestants, seem not to admit; but our best English divines are generally on my side. It was not, however, this matured state of grace, which I meant to talk about in that conversation; it was rather about Christianity itself, as described in the New Testament. But I am by no means sure that I expressed myself so clearly, as not to have appeared to confound the one with the other. Except I am stopped, and questioned, in conversation, I am apt to roll on, without due attention to distinctions which I perceive myself; and, therefore, I think, perhaps, that those whom I talk

to will perceive them too: an error which I would gladly avoid, if my infirmities permitted me.

David, in that noble nineteenth Psalm, makes an important distinction between secret faults and presumptuous sins; and, while he laments the former ("Who can tell how oft he offendeth?"), and prays (therefore looks) for deliverance from them, — he actually implies a freedom, though not a security, from the latter. This appears from the different terms, "cleanse from," and "keep from;" — the former, implying present in-being, the latter, clear separation, and some present distance, though with possibility of their returning and re-entering. Now, this I take to be a statement, brief but clear, of what is essential, at the lowest, to a state of grace; a freedom from all presumptuous sins. The will is averted from moral evil; all the deliberate volitions are pure and holy; wrong desires and passions are felt as diseases, to be habitually guarded against, and, as far as possible, to be wholly suppressed. All those acts, therefore, which imply predominant depravity, are at an end. But, in matters which belong to weakness rather than depravity, to the excitability of the passions, without any perverseness of will, the language may still be that of David, "Who can tell how oft he offendeth?" — "Oh, cleanse thou me from my secret faults!" yea, and will be still, to a certain extent; — he who has conquered one set of faults, finding forthwith, by means of his increased moral sensibility, a new set of still more subtle faults, to be guarded against and resisted.

I am not sure, however, that the being in a state of grace implies necessarily the possession of Christian grace. John the Baptist was in a state of grace, even more surely than David; yet, our Saviour says, "He

that is least in the kingdom of Heaven is greater than he." In somewhat a similar way, one cannot doubt that St. Paul's struggling convert (Rom. vii. 1.), when he delighted in the law of God after the inner man, had got into a state of grace, as really as David had. But it is clearly intimated that he had not what is properly Christian grace, that is, the higher influence which Christ came to bestow, until "the law of the spirit of life" had made him free from "the law of sin and death." (Rom. viii. 2.) But more clearly still, if possible, St. Paul allows the Corinthians to be "babes in Christ;" though he will not allow them to be spiritual, but carnal, and in too many (though, we may infer with certainty, no gross) respects, to "walk as men."

Our blessed Saviour, I conceive, came into the world, not to contract any pre-existing circle of mercy, (except where, by presumptuous rejection of offered light, men contract it for themselves,) but to furnish means for attaining richer mercy and higher privileges. It was not for the mere forming of what St. Paul here means by babes in Christ, that Christ came. Christ came, not only that we might have life, but "that we might have it more abundantly;" in other words, to impart to us *εκ του πληρωματος αυτου, και χαριν αντι χαριτος*, that is, evidently, every grace correspondently to the graces in him. Now, this more abundant life (compared with Old Testament saints), and this efficacious access to and participation of Christ's fulness of grace, I take to be strict and proper Christianity; and to this idea, I think, all the expressions, which the apostolic writers use to describe it, correspond: "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the spirit of adoption (not of *δουλεια*, but of



ὑιοθεσία), whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” — “ Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom, also, we have access by faith, into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God ;” “ because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us.” — “ Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves : know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ dwelleth in you, except ye be reprobates ?” — “ Be careful for nothing; but, in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God ; and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

These, and innumerable other passages of like import, satisfy me, that the true Christian life is not only an inward and spiritual life, but a victorious, peaceful, happy life ; victorious over the world, and over sin, in every instance, that is necessary to continued peace of conscience, and filial access to the Father of Spirits. But, as I have already said, I am far from thinking, that he, who is not thus a new man in Christ Jesus is, therefore, of necessity, not a good man, nor, in any sense, within the covenant of grace. St. Paul's πνευματικὸς ἄνθρωπος (spiritual man) (1 Cor. ii. 15.) was exactly, I think, the complete Christian I describe ; and yet, as I mentioned above, the Apostle, calls those, who were not πνευματικοί (spiritual) but σαρκικοί (carnal), “ Babes in Christ.” In fact, I rest assured, that every sincere endeavour to please God is, and ever must be, successful ; and that, though the want of those blessings which are strictly Christian, imply a

real, and often very painful diminution of happiness in the mind, the person, while humbly and cordially endeavouring to walk before God in truth, and with an upright mind, is substantially accepted of Him.

But then, I think, since Christ came into the world, and took all the pains he did to introduce into the world that higher principle of peace and happiness, it becomes most obligatory, on all who feel the extent of his design, to do what in them lies to promote the accomplishment of the purpose. Every expression implies, that, though God will not now, any more than formerly, “break the bruised reed, or quench the smoking flax,” yet the object of the Gospel is, to heal all moral bruises, and change the smoke into flame. To me, then, it is matter of demonstration, that this efficient view of Christianity, is its appropriate view; and that justice cannot be done to it, except its full energies be distinctly exhibited. It is simply, then, on these grounds, that I talked as I did in our last conversation; and, indeed, in many a former one: but I believe I was more than usually zealous in the last. The fact, in my mind, is, that it is only by such a representation of Christianity, that it can ever be made fully to answer its purpose, or even to excite sufficient attention in the world, for its being examined or judged of. The cold, low, unenergetic notion of it, which is all that the most admit, but which you reject as sincerely as I do, is really below Cicero, in moral matters, and far below Plato, as to the contemplative action of the mind. In Christianity, so represented, thinking persons see nothing that warrants such movements, both in the physical and providential world, as the Christian history asserts. “Nec Deus intersit,” say they, “nisi

*dignus vindice nodus.*"<sup>1</sup> They, therefore, sink into scepticism, or, perhaps, confirmed infidelity, because they do not see the reasonableness of so vast an apparatus, for a purpose so little beyond what could be accomplished by education and good laws. Thus, I soberly think, Christianity has fallen into contempt through pure ignorance of its nature and design. And, until this obstacle is removed, the clearest display of its external evidences, or even its moral excellencies, as exemplified in our Saviour's life, and taught in his precepts, will be of little or no avail.

But, if Christianity really proposes, not only to engage men to struggle with their frailties, but to make them conquerors over them; if it be a divine apparatus for transforming human minds, purifying human hearts, spiritualising and sublimating human affections, so as to make a man superior to all things earthly, and even to himself; giving him wings, as it were, by which he rises, as to his mind, above "the smoke and stir of this dim spot;" and seems to himself comparatively to dwell "in regions mild, of calm and serene air." If, I say, Christianity really makes this offer, it is, at least, worth considering; inasmuch as this is the very object which all enlightened heathens agree in esteeming the one thing needful: and, if it actually accomplishes this, it would be, by the suffrages of all the philosophers, worthy of that God, whom it claims as its author. In what variety of ways, does even Horace alone express the longings of human nature for such a state of moral victory and mental peace? What but this is his "*otium non gemmis neque purpurâ venale nec auro?*"<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Nor on this earth let heaven's dread Ruler stand,  
Unless "a cause" the present God demand.

1 SAM. xvii. 29.

<sup>2</sup> ——— "Ease, unbought  
By mines of wealth, or the imperial purple."

to which he opposes the "miseros tumultus mentis, et curas laqueata circum tecta volantes."<sup>1</sup>

What else was in his mind when he says —

" Navibus atque  
Quadrigris petimus bene vivere; quod petis hic est,  
Est Ulubris, animus si te non deficit æquus?"<sup>2</sup>

The only question was, how the "animus æquus" was to be come at. This, too, was what he talked of at his country house, with his friends: —

" Quod magis ad nos  
Pertinet, et nescire malum est, agitamus: utrumne  
Divitiis homines, an sint virtute beati;  
Quidve ad amicitias, usus rectumne, trahat nos;  
Et quæ sit natura boni, summumque quid ejus."<sup>3</sup>

And still more strongly in this most beautiful passage: —

" Inter cuncta leges, et percunctabere doctos  
Quâ ratione queas traducere leniter ævum;  
Ne te semper inops agitet vexetque Cupido,  
Ne pavor et rerum mediocriter utilium spes:  
Quid minuat curas; quid te tibi reddat amicum;  
Quid purè tranqillet, honos, an dulce lucellum,  
An secretum iter, et fallentis semita vitæ."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ——— " The mind's tumultuous strife,  
And cares, that dark ascend in turbid wreaths,  
Sullying joy's gilded ceilings."

<sup>2</sup> " We crowd the sail, we urge the chariot's speed  
To gladden life, to find the joy we need:  
Here, or in Ulubræ, that joy we find,  
Deep in the centre of a balanced mind."

<sup>3</sup> " Here we discuss (what most for weal or woe  
Concerns ourselves, and shames us not to know):  
If most delight in wealth or virtue lies;  
Which forms our friendships' ordinary ties,  
The sense of interest, or the love of right;  
What is true good, and where its utmost height."

<sup>4</sup> " Here shalt thou read, and learn in wisdom's school  
The purest knowledge, by what happy rule

What was this, but a vague longing for, and a cloudy apprehension of, "the peace of God which passeth all understanding"?

Perhaps no idea in the Greek mythology had a greater tendency to raise the mind of a poet, to some visionary anticipation of this chief object of the human heart, than that of the Muses. They are regarded as the calmers of wrong passions, the inspirers of moral wisdom : —

"Vos lene consilium et datis, et dato  
Gaudetis almæ."<sup>1</sup>

And Horace, accordingly, addresses them with something more like devotion, than we find in any other part of his poetry : and looks to their presence with him as an unfailing source of happiness and safety : —

"Vester, Camœnæ, vester in arduos  
Tollor Sabinos; seu mihi frigidum  
Præneste, seu Tibur supinum,  
Seu liquidæ placuere Baiæ !

"Vestris amicum fontibus et choris,  
Non me Philippis versa acies retro,  
Devota non extinxit arbos,  
Non Siculâ Palinurus undâ.

"Utcunque mecum vos eritis, libens  
Insanientem navita Bosporum

Life may be taught to steal in peace away,  
No more to restless, vain desires a prey;  
By vexing cares and fears no more oppress'd,  
By hopes of objects little worth at best;  
What best may soothe thy sorrows; where to find  
Calm self-contentment, and the approving mind."

<sup>1</sup> "Wisdom you gently breathe, and peace inspire;  
And joy yourselves in hearts that catch your fire."

Tentabo, et arentes arenas  
Littoris Assyrii viator.”<sup>1</sup>

That moral feeling entered strongly into this noble rhapsody, appears from the words quoted just before, which immediately follow; and from this impression arises that picture of the supreme Ruler, which is wonderfully just, as well as truly sublime:—

“ Qui terram inertem, qui mare temperat,  
Ventosque et urbes, regnaque tristia,  
Divosque mortalesque turmas  
Imperio regit unus æquo.”<sup>2</sup>

The concluding stanza shows, still farther, in what frame he wrote:—

“ Vis consilii expers mole ruit suâ;  
Vim temperatam Dî quoque provehunt  
In majus; îdem odere vires  
Omne nefas animo moventes.”<sup>3</sup>

- 1 “ Yours, ever yours, ye nine, where'er I rove,  
O'er Sabine hills, through cool Præneste's grove,  
On Tibur's slope, by Baiæ's pleasant bay,  
Your votary still, through every clime I stray.
- “ Me, of your sacred founts and choral rite  
Enamour'd, not the dread Philippian flight,  
Not that fell tree, not waves have leave to harm,  
Beneath the safeguard of your powerful charm.
- “ Where'er ye deign to lead my wandering way,  
Your presence soothes me, and your smiles repay;  
Ye bid the angry ocean roar in vain,  
And shed a grace o'er parch'd Assyria's plain.”
- 2 “ The sluggish earth, the seas, his bidding know,  
The winds, the haunts of men, the realms below;  
And gods above, and mortals here, obey  
The sole dominion of his equal sway.”
- 3 “ Brute force alone by its own weight breaks down;  
But heaven delights with ampler means to crown  
That power which mind and reason regulate;  
Just heaven, which visits with avenging hate  
That selfsame power, how high soe'er it climb,  
By bold abuse subservient made to crime.”

I have quoted this thus largely, because it shows, most strikingly, to what quarter the human mind points, in its pantings after happiness ; how deeply it feels its need of something, beside itself, to rest upon ; and how instinctively it fixes on Deity, omnipresent ; sublimely, yet gently, influential ; averting evil ; making even dreariness delightful. How much in the very spirit of Addison ! —

“ How are thy servants blest, O Lord,  
How sure is their defence ;  
Eternal Wisdom is their Guide,  
Their help, Omnipotence.

“ In distant lands, and realms remote,  
Supported by thy care,  
Through burning climes I pass’d unhurt,  
And breathed in tainted air.

“ Thy mercy sweeten’d ev’ry toil,  
Made every region please ;  
The hoary Alpine hills it warmed,  
And smoothed the Tyrrhene seas.”

Such, then, on the whole, were the cravings of the human mind, in the most enlightened and improved state it could be in, short of Revelation. And are not all of them, even those seemingly fanciful ones in the ode last quoted, significant of its greatness, and worthy of an immortal creature ? Might it not be fairly expected, then, that, when God should actually reveal himself to man, He should do it in such a manner as to meet these cravings, and effectually lead the human heart to the peace and happiness which it longed for ? The low, unenergetic view of Christianity, presents no such correspondence ; but the spiritualising, renovating, efficient view, which I



have been endeavouring to describe from the New Testament, meets every one of those cravings with consummate congruity. What could be more in point, to all these ideas of moral self-government and self-enjoyment, than our Saviour's invitation, — "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," &c. ? And that other exquisite passage, — "He that drinketh of this water shall thirst again ; but he that drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst ; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Another passage is strictly applicable to this, as the explanation of it : — "This spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive." St. John, vii. 38.

"Felix, qui potuit boni  
Fontem videre lucidum,"<sup>1</sup>

said Boethius, expressing, by this, the chief wish of all true philosophy. He was a Christian ; but his book, "*De Consolatione Philosophiæ*," is Platonic, not evangelic. This coincidence of expression with our Saviour's, is strictly, therefore, the agreement of sound philosophy with it ; *i. e.* of human nature, sufficiently enlightened to know its own wishes. If, then, Horace's "*otium*" be that inward tranquillity, which a man can enjoy only by, in effect, flying from himself, "*Patriæ quis exul se quoque fugit ?*"<sup>2</sup> Is not this, most strictly, what is described in the New Testament, as a putting off the old man, and putting on the new, which is "renewed in knowledge, after the image of Him that created him ?" and,

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<sup>1</sup> "Happy the gifted soul, whose inward sense  
Can pierce the fount of Good's bright effluence."

<sup>2</sup> "What wanderer ever left himself behind ?"

when St. Paul's inner man "is made free, by the law of the spirit of life, in Christ Jesus, from the law of sin, which was in the members," is not this, in the completest sense, "*se fugere?*" (to leave himself behind).

If Horace ask, "*Quæ sit natura boni, summumque quid ejus?*" our Saviour describes his true followers, as having not only made the discovery, but got possession of the treasure; for what but this, is "the one pearl of great price," to purchase which, the genuine Christian has parted with all? "*Quid minuat curas, quid purè tranquillet?*" says Horace. A text already quoted, Phil. iv. 6, 7., "Be careful for nothing," &c. &c.; and "the peace of God," &c., "shall keep your hearts," &c., answers his queries critically and superabundantly.

"*Quid te tibi reddat amicum?*" St. Paul replies, "I would to God that not only thou, but all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether, such as I am." This, and this only, is the language of happiness, —

"The soul's calm sunshine, and the heartfelt joy."

What, again, is Horace's "*animus æquus,*" but that which is the kernel of Christianity? — "to be spiritually minded is life and peace." "*Est Ulubris,*" said he: but St. Paul out-realised this far; for he found it in the inner prison, with his feet fast in the stocks. I deny not but, in this case, some extraordinary influences might have been afforded. But St. Paul's daily and hourly feeling was, "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me." I say, his daily and hourly feeling, else he could not have said, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content:" this is the avowal of a completely confirmed habit; which, however, rested

essentially on that (almost) derived Omnipotence, with which he concludes his wonderful statement; which statement, by the way, Phil. iv. 11, 12, 13., is the solid reality of that which Horace dreamed about so sweetly in the aforesaid ode, “*Descende cœlo,*” &c.

“*Auditis? an me ludit amabilis  
Insania? audire et videor pios  
Errare per lucos, amœnæ  
Quos et aquæ subeunt et auræ.*”<sup>1</sup>

How instinctively does he here seize on the very images used by David, when he anticipates the happiness of true Christians, in the guidance and presence of Him who was “to feed his flock like a shepherd?” — “He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters.” But the passage quoted above is what I chiefly allude to; in which Horace declares his readiness to go any where, if the Muses would only go with him, —

“*Utcunque mecum vos eritis, libens.*”

This sublime illusion is, in St. Paul, plain, downright fact. He is ready — not in a way of rant or enthusiasm, but in sober earnest — to go any where; because he has learned to enjoy himself in any circumstances, in virtue of those resources which he is ever deriving from Omnipotent goodness. David’s high expression fitted him exactly: “Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me.” — “*Insanientem na-*

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“*Hear ye? or mocks my maddening brain  
Some vision? some ideal strain  
Of false, but lovely, song?  
I hear, I wander through the groves  
Whose streams, whose airs inspire those loves  
That melt the heavenly throng.*”

vita Bosphorum tentabo," says Horace ; but St. Paul describes a feeling which he had actually exerted. "Thrice," says he, "I suffered shipwreck ; a night and a day I have been in the deep. In journeyings often ; in perils of waters ; in perils of robbers ; in perils by my own countrymen ; in perils by the heathen ; in perils in the city ; in perils in the wilderness ; in perils in the sea."—"But," as he says elsewhere, "none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy."

Am I not then warranted to maintain, that the very highest flight of Horace's fancy did not rise above St. Paul's Christianity ? and that, consequently, this realises, not only the philosophical speculations, but the poetical dreams, of mental happiness ? At first view, I might be thought to do little honour to Christianity, by supposing any parallel between its comforts and pleasures, and those which Horace hoped for from the influences of the Muses. But let an observation already made be kept in view ; I mean, respecting the high moral feeling which the ode referred to glows with, and the attributes which are given to the imaginary deities invoked ; and, I believe, it will be felt, that no mere Pagan could have conceived ideas more strongly marked, with the natural thirst of the human spirit, after divine, infinite good. If a middle link between Horace and St. Paul were necessary, I would point out Milton's invocation of the Blessed Spirit, in the beginning of the seventh book of the *Paradise Lost*, under the name of "Urania,"

"by that name

If rightly thou art call'd," &c. &c. ;

in which noble passage, the poetry of Horace is completely paralleled, and the Christian piety of St. Paul copied by a kindred spirit, imbibing heavenly influences from the same inexhaustible source ; so that, where both are viewed from this middle point, the purple and gold with which Horace's cloud is arrayed, seems clearly an unconscious reflection of that yet unrisen sun, whose full light and warmth St. Paul is enjoying. Indeed, this, I think, holds good, in some degree, of all poetical sublimity ; every image of the sublime, being, in my mind, a reflected ray of Deity ; and Mr. Addison admirably observes, " that one of the final causes of our delight in any thing that is great, may be this : — The supreme Author of our being has so formed the soul of man, that nothing but Himself can be its last adequate and proper happiness. Because, therefore, a great part of our happiness must arise from the contemplation of His being, that He might give our souls a just relish of such a contemplation, He has made them naturally delight in the apprehension of what is great or unlimited." If we apply, then, this admirable remark to the passages which have been quoted from Horace, will not all I have said of their unconscious reference to the approaching blessedness of Christianity, acquire new strength ? If every species of the sublime be, in some sort, a shadowing of Deity, and excite in the mind some tendency, however vague, toward the mysterious archetype of greatness, the rule must peculiarly hold good, in instances of the moral sublime. For it will scarcely be doubted, that moral nature has even a much higher capacity of rising to the sublime, than any thing physical or material ; and I conceive it will be found, on an attentive view, that heathenism never produced grander instances of the

moral sublime, than are to be found in some of the passages of Horace, which have been referred to, or in another not yet mentioned; I mean, that consummate picture of a just man, in the beginning of the third ode of the third book: —

“ Justum et tenacem propositi virum  
Non civium ardor prava jubentium,  
Non vultus instantis tyranni  
Mente quatit solidâ, neque auster

“ Dux inquieti turbidus Adriæ,  
Nec fulminantis magna Jovis manus :  
Si fractus illabatur orbis  
Impavidum ferient ruinæ.”<sup>1</sup>

I cannot help again asking, is not this St. Paul? In no human being, surely, was every possible part of this picture so substantially realised. One question only, therefore, remains to be answered, in order to make these observations apply to Christianity in general. Did St. Paul exemplify that complex of virtue and happiness, which heathen poetry, as well as heathen philosophy, thus panted for, as man's chief good, — in virtue of his apostolic endowments, or in consequence of his Christian graces? In that fortitude, that equanimity, that superiority to the world and to human frailty, that happy contentedness in all conditions, which so nobly marked his whole character and conduct, did he exhibit what was peculiar to him-

<sup>1</sup> The man of strong resolve, and just design,  
When, for bad ends, infuriate mobs combine,  
Or gleams the terror of the monarch's frown,  
Firm in his rock-based worth, on both looks down.

On the vex'd sea, when fierce tornadoes rise,  
Serene he dares the waves, and marks the skies ;  
Or, if earth's fires should rend this solid ball,  
Unscared he meets, unhurt survives ~~them all~~ *her fall*

self and his apostolic brethren, or what all Christians, in all ages, if they faithfully avail themselves of the aids of their holy religion, may participate in and attain to? In order to answer this question, one need only, I should think, recur to those expressions of our Saviour and his apostles, which have been already quoted; inasmuch as they evidently describe such a frame of mind as that which St. Paul manifested (doubtless in the highest degree), and yet they speak of that frame as the effect of the ordinary influences of God's divine Spirit. It is not miraculous faith, but Christian faith which they portray. If this could be doubted, other scriptures might be brought abundantly to confirm it. "Who is he," says St. John, "that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith:" "whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world."—"Ye are dead," says St. Paul, "and your life is hid with Christ in God."—"As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God: and because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father."—"Whom having not seen, ye love," says St. Peter: "In whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls:" which last words, by the way, appear to me most clearly to imply, that Christian salvation is not merely a future thing, but that it commences here, in that divine change, which all the above texts agree in asserting; and to which St. Peter had just before attributed a security like that which is derived from an impregnable garrison; "who are kept," says he (*φρουρουμενους*), "as in a garrison, by the power of God, through faith

unto (final) salvation." These characters of true, complete Christianity, are so uniform throughout the New Testament, that it might be asked, — if this filial, victorious, peaceful, happy state be not Christianity, what other description of it can be collected?—if all these high attainments were merely apostolical, where shall we find an account of the benefits to be enjoyed, or the blessings to be aimed at, by Christians of following ages? In fact, as, where there is but one thing of a kind, there is no danger of mistaking it for some other similar thing, so, there being no Christianity (I do not mean to the exclusion of lower degrees, while higher are sincerely aimed at, but of lower species in which one might safely rest) described in the New Testament, but this high, heavenly, transformative Christianity; it must be granted, that this is the state to which God calls us, and into which he is graciously ready to bring us, if we seek his mercy and grace as his word directs us. Is it not, then, a work worthy of God, that what human nature in its noblest elevations, — its purest tastes, — its most ardent and sublimest conceptions, looked toward and longed after, should at length, in his due time, be brought within man's reach? And is not the perfect correspondence of that liberty with which the Son of God makes free, with these anticipations, a subject worthy of attention, and replete with satisfaction and delight? Who that reads and compares these two sets of quotations, can avoid allowing their wonderful harmony? And what can we infer on the whole, but that the deepest views of Christianity are those, which best, which alone, indeed, accord with the obvious, and otherwise unprovided for, exigencies of human nature? They are clearly the deepest wants, and the most anxious cravings of our nature, which the above



quotations from Horace describe; and which, if unprovided for, would imply a deficiency in the great economy of this world, utterly unlike what appears in any other instance. In fact, if that *otium* which men pant for, were not any where to be found, it would follow, that, while every trivial want and wish of animal man was superabundantly provided for, the great central appetite of intellectual man, which designates him as God's chief work in the visible creation, was abandoned to the self-torture of irremediable vacuity. What, then, is more consonant to rational supposition, than that this want should be supplied, and, consequently, that Christianity should be of a nature adequate, in every respect, to this invaluable purpose?

It is to be lamented, that too many writers, who imagined themselves the truest church-of-England men, have almost entirely overlooked this felicitating influence of our divine religion. They have considered the Christian system as so imperceptibly efficacious, that he who walks in their path is to hope for no other comfort or happiness, than that which naturally grows out of his own progressive endeavours. "Whatever grace," says Dr. Scott in his Christian life, "the Spirit of God now affords us, it ordinarily works on us in the same way, and after the same manner, as if all were performed by the strength of our own reason; so that, in the renovation of our natures, we cannot certainly distinguish what is done by the Spirit, from what is done by our reason and conscience co-operating with him." (Vol. iii. p. 80.) If Dr. Scott meant, merely, that the Spirit of God, in the act of influencing, is not certainly distinguishable from the natural motions of our own minds, or animal spirits, no sober Christian would dispute the position. But his expressions go farther, and seem

to imply, that the effects are as indistinct as the operation, — we cannot distinguish what is done by the Spirit from what is done by our “reason and conscience:” much of the same kind is Bishop Watson’s assertion, in his address to persons confirmed. “The manner,” says he, “in which the Holy Spirit gives his assistance to faithful and pious persons, is not attended with any certain sign of its being given; it is secret and unknown. You cannot distinguish the working by which He helpeth your infirmities, from the ordinary operations of your own minds.” (Dublin edition, p. 14.)

But, on this view, would it not be reasonable to ask, what does Christianity do for us? or wherein consists its value, if it produces no perceptible effects? We have reason and conscience inherent in our nature, and we can form a pretty clear estimate of what they are competent to effect, by reflecting on what passes in our own bosoms. If, then, the additional influences of God’s Holy Spirit bring with them no additional effects, no certain sign of their being given, what benefit do we derive from our Saviour’s coming into the world? what is that rest which he promised? that “well of water” within the soul, “springing up into everlasting life?” what that “peace of God which passeth all understanding?” How, indeed, could it pass any understanding, if it were not to be distinguished from what is done by reason and conscience? or what meant our divine Redeemer, when he said in his last discourse, “He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him?” This was beyond the comprehension of the apostles, and, therefore, one of them asked, “Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the

world?" If, therefore, the expressions used by our Saviour had really meant nothing but the comfort arising from enlightened reason and a tolerably quiet conscience, now would be the time for so stating the fact. But the answer repeats the foregoing assertion, in terms still less capable of any cold, or merely rational construction. "If any man love me he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." Nay, more, as if our Lord considered the spiritual happiness which these elevated expressions represent, as the grandest object he could propose to excite the warmth of cold and languid minds, he almost uses the very same idea, in his apocalyptic message to the angel of the church of Laodicea:—"Behold," says he, "I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open unto me, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me."

I have said, the same idea, but, on closer consideration, a difference presents itself. "To come in and sup," answers more to the idea of a visit, than a fixed residence; it is therefore, I think, to be inferred, that, though both expressions must infallibly mean such divine and spiritual influences, as far transcend what mere reason or conscience could effect in the mind, yet there is a difference of degree and measure, as far as "to come in and sup with" one, falls short of stated residence.

And there is an obvious fitness in this difference, for the promise in the Gospel is made to him who loveth Christ, and, in consequence of that love, keepeth his words; which clearly implies a confirmed and effectual attachment. In this case, therefore, the blessing is that of permanent abode, both of the Father and the Son; whereas the apocalyptic promise

is made to a much lower degree of right conduct, viz. to the first opening of the heart to our Saviour. Here is to be a gracious and consolatory visit from himself alone, which, however difficult to be clearly explained, must have a solid correspondent meaning; else the all-wise Son of God would not have used the terms, nor have thus strikingly varied his language.

With both these passages, however, other passages of the New Testament respectively correspond; and, by comparing them together, some good degree of elucidation may be obtained; at least, the deep and entire spirituality of our Lord's meaning, in both instances, may be made more apparent. "As new-born babes," says St. Peter, "desire the sincere milk of the word"—"if so be that ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." Now, does not this "tasting that the Lord is gracious," which the Apostle here seems to consider as inseparable from the spiritual new birth of a genuine Christian, appear to mean the same thing with what our Saviour promises to him who "opens to him?" Both expressions mark precisely the same period of the Christian course; and both equally denote such a communication of the grace of Christ, as the mind must be sensible of, and powerfully impressed with. Nothing less can be implied, in Christ's coming into the soul, and supping with it, and it with him; and what St. Peter speaks of, ("if so be that ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious") presents to us the idea of an inward perception, similarly felicitating, and having the same divine person of the Trinity for its object. It is also observable, that this very idea is elsewhere used, respecting the same class of persons; I mean new converts. "It is impossible," says the author of the

Epistle to the Hebrews, "for those who are once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance." I am not enquiring what these latter words mean, nor would I dispute with any who would assert, that, in some of the first expressions, there is a reference to the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit: but this I venture to say, that to taste the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, are expressions which will bear no other than a moral or spiritual meaning; and yet no less necessarily imply an inward mental sensation, of a kind substantially distinct from, and superior to, all that could come from mere reason or conscience. This might be farther illustrated from various passages of the Acts and the Epistles, such as the Ethiopian nobleman, going on his way "rejoicing" (Acts viii. 39.); in that passage, "then had the churches rest," &c. — "and walking in the fear of God, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied" (ix. 31.); and in that of the newly-converted jailer, who "rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." (xvi. 34.) Indeed our Saviour himself seems to intimate this, when, in likening his spirit to treasure hid in a field, which a man findeth, he adds, "and for joy thereof he goeth and selleth all," &c. &c.

In quoting these passages, I do not mean to insist on any exact parallel, either in manner or degree, between the operations of grace here described, and what it is absolutely necessary to feel in order to salvation. These circumstances, no doubt, greatly differed from each other then, and there may be addi-

tional grounds for such differences to-day; but I adduce them to show the general bearing of Scripture, in congruity with the expressions of our Lord first quoted; and I wish to have it seen from this concurrent tendency, that the cold, rationalising scheme of religion has no countenance in the sacred word; but that, on the contrary, Christianity, when it works in its own appropriate way, must so work, as to be felt throughout all the powers of the soul, in those enlightening, purifying, quickening, spiritualising, and of course felicitating effects, which differ as much from all that mere reason and conscience can excite, as the cheering sunbeams differ from the midnight moonshine.

But, if this appears in passages of Scripture which describe the first workings of Christian influences in the heart, how much more must it be manifested in those which describe Christian maturity? those, I mean, which connect with our Saviour's higher promise,—“I and my Father will come and make our abode with him.” On this head, I will adduce one passage only, because I soberly think it cannot be added to: I mean St. Paul's prayer for the Ephesians (Ch. iii. 14.): “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family both in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.” Now let these words be

weighed without prejudice ; and do they not obviously and incontrovertibly imply a state of the human mind, necessarily distinguishable from every thing to which man ever raised himself? Do they not answer, with perfect correspondence, to our Lord's promise of the spiritual coming of Him and of his Father into the heart? "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith," and "that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God?" Can we then form too high an idea of the spiritual blessedness here referred to? or annex any other possible sense to the expressions used throughout the entire passage, than those of habitual victory, unspeakable peace, unshaken establishment, profound self-enjoyment, unblemished purity of purpose, and perfect filial affiance in, and access to, the eternal Father of spirits and fountain of happiness? Yet all these ideas, magnificent as they are, come not up to St. Paul's estimate of Christian attainments ; for, as if unsatisfied with all he has said, he adds, "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church throughout all ages, world without end, Amen." In these words, then, understood in the soberest manner, there is, altogether, a view of Christianity, which I conceive supports every thing I have been stating, and realises every thing I have quoted. It is, in fact, the representation of very heaven upon earth :—

"Then shalt thou not be loth  
To leave this paradise — but shalt possess  
A paradise within thee happier far."

Of such an inward paradise, we have here the unquestionable description ; containing all, and much

more than all, that ever was imagined by the most elevated human mind.

I might easily show, that the sublime Christianity thus described by St. Paul, and thus answering to so many ardent pantings and preconceptions of even the heathen world, is no more than was anticipated by the Old Testament Prophets; and that nothing short of this would be a complete verification of the frequent images of happiness, both in the Psalms and prophetic writings; where we find every thing which yields pure, natural, exalted delight, throughout nature, brought to illustrate the expected state of things. But I have enlarged too much already: what I wish therefore is, to answer, if I can, a very natural question; at least, one which I conceive to arise from what has been stated.

“In what view, after all, are we to understand these scriptures, if literally interpreted, as the above remarks seem to suppose they should be, so as still to preserve the rationality of religion, to secure it from the charge of enthusiasm, and to afford no encouragement to persons who are themselves enthusiastically disposed?” To this I reply, that there can be no need to abate the strength of any of the above expressions, in order to guard them from fanatical abuse: on the contrary, I rather think that attempts of that kind have peculiarly served the cause of fanaticism. The jejune interpretations of such writers as those mentioned above, have so evidently fallen below the force and fulness of the text, as to make their comment a kind of concession to fanatics, that Scripture, in its strict sense, was really with them. In order, therefore, to secure the rationality of Christianity, as well as its depth and energy, these passages, instead of being loaded or diluted, ought to be dis-



passionately investigated; in the confidence, that the Spirit of God has suffered nothing to enter into the sacred volume, of whose clear and uncoerced meaning we need entertain any apprehension.

What, then, is that high state of Christian attainment, which the strongest of these texts describe, — but the being impressed with certain incontrovertible facts, to the degree and in the manner, which, considering the interest we have in those facts, strict common sense itself would dictate? If the Gospel be true, it is a concern of such magnitude as should in all reason be paramount in our minds; and the Gospel being indubitably and irrefragably true, its not being thus paramount implies the grossest and most irrational infatuation. But why has it not this ascendancy? St. Paul answers, “The animal man knoweth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned;” that is, the Gospel is diametrically opposite to the taste of depraved human nature; the unchanged, unpurified heart goes quite another way, and the understanding goes along with it; taste dictating to understanding, in almost every instance in this world. An inward influence of divine grace, therefore, is necessary, to dispel this delirious dream, to rationalise the mind, and to liberate the higher faculties from their captivity to the lower; to emancipate thought and ratiocination from that inner prison of sense, wherein their feet are, as it were, made fast, in the stocks of appetite and passion. When this is once fully done, or in proportion as it is done, the facts of religion, as recorded in Scripture, and borne witness to by internal conscience and external nature, are apprehended as facts; and proportionably to their

being thus apprehended, do they engage, and influence, and felicitate the soul. Reason and conscience informed the heathen sages, that there was a chief good of man, compared with which earth and all its seductive contents were very vanity. They saw, that this chief good, implied predominant virtue in man; but they did not clearly, though some, in part, did see, that the soul of virtue is to love the living source of virtue. But to them, this living source of virtue was little more, than undefined, as well as unapproachable brightness. This, however, is actually defined to us, in the Gospel, in a manner fitted, by the very skill of God himself, to attract, inform, and satisfy our minds; to operate, in the aptest way conceivable, on all our passions and affections; to subdue all that is evil in us; to quicken, exalt, and make ascendant, all that is rational and noble in us; to engage us in looking at the things which are not seen, and to enable (us) to endure, as seeing Him that is invisible. The facts of the Gospel need only to be fully felt, in order to these effects being produced. "We," says St. Paul, "beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the <sup>same</sup> image."

What, then, is really the difference, between the merely rational, and the spiritual Christian? Is it, that the latter receives an hypothesis which the former rejects? I conceive not merely, nor chiefly, this; but, rather, that the one is more deeply impressed by the indisputable facts of Christianity, than the other. The one feels, while the other only reads or hears. Why was it that, through the death of the Son of God, the world was crucified to St. Paul, and he to the world? Clearly, because he apprehended this fact, in rational proportion to its weight and magnitude; and he who at this day is enabled, by the grace of God, to contem-

plate the same divine object with equal realisation, becomes inspired with the same holy temper. "Ye shall know the truth," said our Saviour, "and the truth shall make you free."—"Faith," says an apostolic writer, "is the *ὑποστασις* (substance) of things hoped for, and the *ελεγχος* (evidence) of things not seen." What is this, but the apprehending of divine things as realities? He who finds himself in a storm on shipboard, needs not argue himself into alarm, nor strive to recollect all the various circumstances of danger. If, therefore, divine and eternal things do once impress themselves on the mind as facts, religion will grow out of that impression by a necessity of nature; and, in proportion to its strength, it will influence all the movements both of the inner and outward man.

The making this impression, then, is the great operation of divine grace. Man cannot give it to himself; we are made sensible of this, times without number. When we wish to rise above worldly uneasiness, or to resist alarming temptations, we endeavour to call up stronger feelings of religion, as our sole resource: but experience tells us how little we can do in this way; and even our very endeavours are too often cold and half-hearted; we are conscious that, if our sense of God, of Christ, of heaven, and of hell was more lively, we should find it our best support, both against trouble and temptation. If, then, after many such ineffectual wishes and endeavours, we feel those things at length taking real hold of our mind,—so that the awful apprehension of eternal things, excites in us a salutary and effectual watchfulness, and the warm sense of the divine excellence, engages and spiritualises our affections, raising them to high and heavenly objects, and, by that means,

making us superior to temptations by which hitherto we were led captive, — this, I conceive, he who feels it; will never attribute to mere reason or conscience, or to any less cause, than His influence, who quickeneth all things.

But, though it be divine, it is most rational. It is, indeed, a felt return to right reason, after phrenzy : “ When he came to himself,” says our Saviour of the prodigal : all before was infatuation. Now, for the first time, the mind begins to discover realities. It perceives, that its former insensibility to these was an absolute sleep of the soul, and that it only then awoke, when it became sensible of them. In such feelings, then, the genuine religion of the Gospel commences : and, as the matter-of-fact persuasion of divine things increases, it increases, also, until all painful conflict is put an end to, by the decided ascendancy of spiritual objects and attachments.

It is in this sense, that so much efficacy is attributed to faith, by our Saviour and his apostles : “ How is it that ye have no faith ? ” — “ It is because ye have no faith. ” — “ By faith Moses endured, as seeing him who is invisible. ” To have faith, then, is to have that lively sense of divine things, which makes them efficient on our hearts, and tempers, and conducts. It is self-evident that such a sense, in proportion to its strength, must produce this effect ; and it is equally clear that, when it is strong, it will imply the clear consciousness of its own existence in the mind ; such a consciousness, however, will necessarily set a man in complete peace as to his spiritual state ; and from his sense of divine things, and that peace conjointly, will arise multiform comforts, and satisfactions; and instances of continued advancement, answering to every thing which St. Paul has described, in the unparalleled

passage quoted above, from his Epistle to the Ephesians.

To me, then, the more I consider the subject, the more evident it is, that the radical, substantial disagreement, between the merely moral Christian, and the experimentalist, (if I may use such a term,) is, that the former has a weaker sense of the religious facts recorded in the Scripture, than the latter. If these be felt only as they should be, the consequences are infallible. When, therefore, such consequences are not found, the inference, I conceive, ought to be, not difference of judgment, nor different habits of intellect, but actual deficiency in the radical principle.

I grant fully, that differences of temper and mind have their great effects, and, therefore, allowance must be made for much variety in degree and circumstance. A man who has not quick sensibilities in matters of this life, will probably have a proportionably weak, or rather less impassioned feeling of divine and eternal things: but, perhaps, this makes little difference on the whole; for they who are deficient in any one faculty, have it generally made up, to a competent degree, in some other; and, thus, he who is apparently cold in affection, may have solider judgment, and steadier resolution. These qualities, therefore, will, in religious matters, make abundantly up for the want of warmth, if, as I said, the matter-of-fact apprehension be at the bottom: and, though such minds seldom feel ecstatic pleasure, they, if faithful to divine grace, are compensated, in a more uniform peace of conscience, and a deeper, because reflective sense of satisfaction. The influential facts of the Gospel, are ineffably adjusted to all possible minds. The person of a poetical mind, finds them set off by every adjunct that can engage his warmest imagination; while the

person of a practical mind, discovers a substantiality of excellence, which at once satisfies his coolest reason, and attaches every moral principle of his nature.

We see, through life, that, in most cases, persons find some way of doing what they are strongly inclined to. If talents be wanting, it will not be so well done ; but it is a fact, however, that strong inclination seldom wholly fails of its object. Thus, if piety be real, it will not fail of its purpose, for want of natural warmth of affection. There is always enough of this for the purposes of life ; and, where sentiment is deficient, principle well supplies its room. Let a sense of divine things be once predominant, and it will produce its due effects, let the constitutional turn be what it may : it will engage whatever powers a man's mind possesses, and these will always be enough ; for, where religion finds not strong affections to work by, it, consequently, has not strong passions to subdue. In all tempers and habits, therefore, if divine things be only practically apprehended as matters of fact, the effect will be in substance the same, whatever may be the circumstantial variety. All men, whatever be their tempers, would shudder at feeling the shock of an earthquake, and would alike avoid a pestilential contagion. If we can suppose, then, the great things of eternity so impressed upon our minds, as to make them be felt as real facts, we certainly suppose a case, at least, as much fitted to subdue all minds, and work upon all tempers, as either the earthquake or the pestilence.

That divine things may thus be impressed on the mind, is made plain to us by a matter of fact which often occurs, — I mean the powerful apprehensions which are felt by so many persons, on the real or supposed approach of death. In such cases, how asto-

nishingly quick-sighted do persons become, both as to sins and duties ; and what a distinct view have they, both of what they actually are, and what they ought to have been ! I allow this must be in proportion to their knowledge, thus far, — that he who has no knowledge at all would scarcely be susceptible of such feelings, and he who has much knowledge, and abused it, would be liable to such feelings in a more poignant degree. But the truth is, that, in this most awful case, a little knowledge goes very far, when the conscience is thoroughly alarmed. This latter faculty quickly communicates its light to the understanding ; and the man acquires more sound good sense in an hour, perhaps, than he had gained throughout his whole life before : were he to recover, and retain exactly this view of things, what an altered person would he be ! He would be grave, and modest, and circumspect, as to himself ; humane, benevolent, and indulgent, toward his fellow-creatures ; and, above all, he would walk conscientiously and humbly with his God. His near view of eternity, has already convinced him powerfully, that he ought to be possessed of all those tempers ; consequently, a still deeper and more confirmed view, would actually inspire him with all those very dispositions ; for, in moral matters, to desire and possess, differ in degree, rather than reality. He who desires a right temper, loves it ; and, if that love be strong enough, it actually becomes the wished-for temper. What, then, is the faith I have been speaking of, but such a feeling fixed in the mind, independently of outward vicissitudes, as has been just described, as growing out of extreme illness ? It is such a realising sense of divine things, as makes them have the impressiveness of present facts. This is the apprehension of the alarmed

dying man : the world, which he had doated on, now proves the empty shadow ; and that invisible world, which, till now, he had scarcely thought of, seems to him the only substance. Reason tells us at once, what an effect this temper would have, if it were to be permanent : the same reasoning informs us, no less clearly, what results must arise, from that faith which is established in the heart by the operation of God. " Blessed art thou," said our Saviour to St. Peter, " for flesh and blood have not revealed it unto thee, but my Father, which is in heaven."

It may be asked, " But is it possible for a man in health, and moving through the world, to have any thing like those impressions of eternal and invisible things, which dying men have ?" To this I reply, that what is represented in Scripture, as the central principle of all true religion, must, in the nature of things, be possible. But this realising feeling of invisible things is so represented, particularly through the 11th chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. I use the word feeling, because no weaker word will do justice to the views given in that passage of Scripture. But I mean nothing mystical, except the deep mysteriousness of the power which works the effect ; for the very impossibility, which is so often alleged, of such an apprehension being attainable at all, is an indirect acknowledgment that man cannot give it to himself ; and illustrates what I have said above, that he who possesses it, is satisfied that mere reason and conscience could not have produced it. Let it not, however, be thought, that, because I compare this faith to the feeling of a dying man, there is, therefore, any thing gloomy or morbid in it. I think all I have said, guards fully against this supposition. The sick man's feeling is gloomy, because it is forced



upon him, and because it condemns him ; but he who has the same realising view in the midst of life and health, feels it to be the very dawn of an eternal day ; and he rejoices in it, and is cheered by it, as he (if small things may serve to illustrate what is infinite) rejoices, who, having been benighted in a dreary way, perceives, at length, that morning is actually breaking upon him : —

“ As when a scout,  
Through dark and desert ways with peril gone  
All night, at last, by break of cheerful dawn,  
Obtains the brow of some high climbing hill,  
Which to his eye discovers, unawares,  
The goodly prospect of some foreign land  
First seen, or some renown'd metropolis  
With glistening spires and pinnacles adorned,  
Which now the rising sun gilds with his beams.”

The suddenness implied in this simile, I leave out ; not, however, doubting, that the first communication of the divine grace of faith, has often been, yea, and is often, sudden, but certainly not necessarily so. In other respects, I soberly think the case barely treated with justice, when thus illustrated ; keeping always in view, however, those differences of natural temper already referred to.

Dr. Johnson admirably observes, that “ whatever withdraws us from the power of our senses, whatever makes the past, the distant, or the future, predominate over the present, advances us in the dignity of thinking beings.” (*Journey to the Hebrides, Icolmkill.*) Nothing, surely, can be more self-evident ; and this is the identical purpose, to which, the parent grace of revealed religion, faith, is consummately adapted by the all-wise God. In his goodness, and his wis-

dom, he has so formed us, as to make our minds naturally liable to be ruled by some one predominant object, and the feeling which it excites ; so that, in fact, there is at all times, in active and ardent minds especially, some master-passion, which rules all for the time, while God and eternal things are forgotten. This disposition of man, makes him a slave to an endless variety of tyrants. But, when the light of truth shines upon the mind, this tendency becomes the instrument of inestimable benefit : it sets the feeling, then first generated, at the head of all the powers and passions, and transforms slavery, and degradation, and wretchedness, into reason and order, dignity and happiness. In fact, our love, is ourselves : if we love base things, we are base ; if we love trifling things, we are triflers ; if we love earthly things, we are worldly ; and, by parity of reason, when we love divine and eternal things, we are spiritual and heavenly. Faith, then, is simply such an apprehension, as makes the things apprehended the object of supreme love ; and, when we are inwardly conscious, and outwardly perceive the fruits, of such faith, and such love, what, on this side heaven, can be thought of, more truly noble, or more absolutely happy ?

“ This,” says Sir Matthew Hale, “ gives the law not only to a man’s words or actions, but to his very thoughts and purposes ; so that he dares not entertain a very thought, unbecoming the presence of that God, to whom all our thoughts are legible. It regulates and governs the passions of the mind, and brings them into due moderation and frame ; it gives a man a right estimate of this present world, and sets his heart and hopes above it, so that he never loves it more than it deserves : it makes the wealth and glory of this world, high places and great preferments,

but of a low and little value to him ; so that he is neither covetous, nor ambitious, nor over-solicitous about the advantages of it : it brings a man to that frame, that righteousness, justice, honesty, and fidelity, which are, as it were, part of his nature ; he can sooner die, than commit or purpose that, which is unjust, dishonest, or unworthy a good man : it makes him value the love of God, and peace of conscience, above all the wealth and honours in the world, and be very vigilant to keep it inviolably : though he be under a due apprehension of the love of God to him, yet it keeps him humble and watchful, and free from all presumption, so that he dares not, under a vain confidence of the indulgent favour and mercy of God, turn aside to commit, or purpose even, the least injury to man : he performs all his duties to God, in sincerity, and integrity, and constancy ; and, while he lives on earth, his conversation, his hopes, his treasure, and the flower of his expectation, are in heaven ; and he entirely endeavours to walk suitably to such a hope. In sum, it restores the image of God unto the soul, in righteousness and true holiness ; —

“ *Compositum jus fasque animo, sanctosque recessus  
Mentis, et incoctum generoso pectus honesto.*”<sup>1</sup>

The whole of judge Hale's life and writings evince, that what he here describes was copied from his own life and heart. I could put this beyond the shadow of doubt, by other quotations ; but, after just observing how powerfully these two noble lines from Persius harmonise with the former quotations from Horace,

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<sup>1</sup> Conscience and law in moral bond combined ; —

The pure recesses of a holy mind ; —

And honour's self, within the generous heart enshrined.

I will add another instance of Christian victoriousness, taken professedly from a good man's own bosom : " In the midst of all," says Doddridge, after referring to clouds of calumny with which he was encompassed, " my soul dwells at ease in God, and I find unutterable pleasure, in a conquest obtained over those resentments, which are ready to rise on such occasions, but which, I can truly say, are ' Crucified on the Cross of Christ.' " When one reads this, can one help exclaiming, what a blessing is genuine Christianity, which thus wonderfully changes the bitterest trials of life, into sources of inconceivable satisfaction ? Is not this exactly what our Lord promised : — " In the world ye shall have tribulation ; but in me ye shall have peace ? " Is it not an exquisite exemplification of what David so beautifully says : — " Thou shalt hide him privily by thine own presence, from the provoking of all men ; thou shalt keep him secretly in thy pavilion, from the strife of tongues ? " — If the *nil conscire sibi* (unconsciousness of evil) be not unjustly deemed a *murus aheneus* (wall of brass), what is it thus to " dwell under the defence of the Most High, and abide under the shadow of the Almighty ? "

It is remarkable, that there is nothing supposed here, which the sober and unenthusiastic Addison, does not strictly recognise, and most admirably describe. " We (says he), who have this veil of flesh, standing between us and the world of spirits, must be content to know that the Spirit of God is present with us, by the effects which he produces in us. Our outward senses are too gross to apprehend him : we may taste and see how gracious he is, by his influence upon our minds ; by those virtuous thoughts which he awakens in us ; by those secret comforts and refreshments which he conveys into our souls ; and by those

ravishing joys and inward satisfactions which are perpetually springing up, and diffusing themselves among the thoughts of good men. He is lodged in their very essence, and is as a soul within the soul, to irradiate its understanding, rectify its will, purify its passions, and enliven all the powers of man. How happy, therefore, is an intellectual being, who, by prayer and meditation, by virtue and good works, opens this communication between God and his own soul ! Though the whole creation frowns upon him, and all nature looks black about him, he has his light and support within him, that are able to cheer his mind, and bear him up in the midst of all those horrors that encompass him ; he knows that his Helper is at hand, and is always nearer to him than any thing can be, which is capable of annoying or terrifying him. In the midst of calumny or contempt, he attends to that Being who whispers better things within his soul, and whom he looks upon as his defender, his glory, and the lifter-up of his head. In his deepest solitude and retirement, he knows that he is in company with the greatest of beings ; and perceives within himself such real sensations of his presence, as are more delightful than any thing that can be met with in the conversation of his creatures. Even in the hour of death, he considers the pains of his dissolution to be nothing else, but the breaking down of that partition, which stands betwixt his soul and the light of that Being who is always present with him, and is about to manifest itself to him in fulness of joy." (Spect. viii. No. 571.)

Now, let these three extracts be compared with what has been quoted, both from heathen poetry and holy writ, and let it be judged, whether they do not add all the weight that human testimonies can give to the

preceding observations. I acknowledge that it is matured Christianity only, to which these representations will fully correspond ; to that " second degree of victory over sin," as Dr. Cudworth describes it, " which is such a measure of strength in the inner man, and such a degree of crucifixion of our sinful lusts, as that a man will not knowingly and deliberately do any thing, that his conscience plainly tells him is a sin, though there be never so great temptations to it." (2 Serm. annexed to the Intell. System.) Yet I cannot but think, that, where religion is pursued, at once with earnestness of mind, and in accordance with the views of the New Testament, some tastes of such happiness are generally soon perceived ; and, as the mind advances in its holy and happy progress, they become more habitual. But, as I have said, this is to be expected, only where the piety is evangelic, as well as sincere. He who hopes (as Dr. Scott proposes in his *Christian Life*) to proceed from acts to habits, and from habits to dispositions ; in other words, to transform his heart by reforming his outward conduct, will scarcely think of such inward influences, and consequently not look for them : but he who feels that to be carnally minded is death, and that the carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither, indeed, can be, will no less naturally seek a cure adequate to his malady. The former, deeming his disease to be superficial, has no clear idea of any other than a superficial cure, which he doubts not will be effected by such palliatives, as it is fully in his own rational and moral power to apply : the latter feels, on the contrary, that, in a spiritual sense, his " whole head is sick and his whole heart faint ;" and that " there is a law in his members, warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin." Though, therefore,

he is watchful against every appearance of evil, it is rather that he may not grow worse, than with the hope of making himself better. He feels that he is dead in trespasses and sins, and he can merely implore life from its infinite fountain. Prayer, therefore, is his sheet anchor, and the language of David in the fifty-first Psalm, the sentiment of his heart. I am far from saying that the feelings I describe are indispensable to sincerity, but I do think they are the natural preliminaries to evangelic spirituality: for he who thus prays, comes, as it were, within the very sphere of the divine influences; and seldom remains long without feeling, with David, that "it is good for him to draw nigh unto God." In such exercises of mind it is, that spiritual objects are apprehended with greatest force and warmth; and, in proportion as the heart is penetrated by them, a divine delight is felt, which, when once thoroughly tasted, will, by the "honest and good heart," be ever after longed for and sought after. Even the more awful matters in religion will, in this way, yield delight; because to feel these deeply, is the best security against carelessness and presumption; and to be safe from these is, in effect, to be happy. Prayer, therefore, by such a one, will not be performed merely as a duty, but will be resorted to as the great means of gaining strength and refreshment for the soul; for it is felt that, in proportion as such spiritual sensations grow strong, temptations grow weak, wrong passions are repressed, right affections become habitual: "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, comes at length, to keep the heart and mind."

"I told him," says Burnet, in his account of Lord Rochester, "that all his speculations of philosophy would not serve him in any stead to the reforming of

his nature and life, till he applied himself to God for inward assistances. It was certain, that impressions made in his reason governed him as they were lively presented to him ; but these are so apt to slip out of our memory, and we are so apt to turn our thoughts from them, and, at some times, the contrary impressions are so strong, that let a man set up a reasoning in his mind against them, he finds that celebrated saying of the poet, —

—— ‘ *Video meliora proboque,  
Deteriora sequor,*’<sup>1</sup>

to be all that philosophy will amount to. Whereas, those who, upon such occasions, apply themselves to God by earnest prayer, — feel a disengagement from such impressions, and themselves endued with a power to resist them, so that those bonds, which formerly held them, fall off.”

Here, then, is, as I conceive, a most striking difference, between the merely rationalising, and the spiritual Christian : the one is not, the other is, a man of prayer : the former may have some vague notion of insensible aid from heaven, but his distinct hopes are all placed on his own rational and moral endeavours : instead, therefore, of recurring to prayer, he thinks of strengthening his own resolutions ; and sets himself to recollect motives and reasons for right conduct, rather than expects perceptible divine assistances, like that described by Burnet : he, consequently, confines his efforts, chiefly, to outward acts, as he is conscious his power goes very little farther ; and that his thoughts and feelings

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<sup>1</sup> I know the better way ; but, Oh ! untrue  
To what my mind approves, the worse pursue.



will, for the most part, take their own course, in spite of his attempts to control them. The success of such a course, therefore, can be but slight, at the best ; and he who pursues it, seldom aims at much : he thinks human nature is frail, and God is merciful ; and if a man does his best, no more can be expected from him.

On such persons, it belongs not to me to pronounce any sentence : I certainly think they are exactly those, whom St. Paul describes as not attaining to righteousness, because they seek it not by faith, but, as it were, by the works of the law. But, I conceive, many conscientious persons may be pursuing this course, through ignorance of any better one. Leaving such, therefore, to God's infinite mercy, I only say, happy is he who so despairs of his own efforts, as to expect support and establishment, only through means of prayer ; and who, whether he hears, or reads, or converses, looks to his closet, as that ultimate sphere of action, to which all the rest are but subservient. By such a course as I already intimated, and by such alone, he brings himself into the presence of God ; and, in that presence, sin appears exceeding sinful. Outward reformation will not avail there : " If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things." Prayer, therefore, excites tenderness of conscience,—whose language is, " Search me, O God, and prove me ; look well if there be any way of wickedness in me." Thus, the depth and variety of the disease being more and more felt, the least degree of effectual aid will be felt also. He prays thus earnestly, because he feels that there is no health in him ; and, consequently, when any better feeling springs up in his heart, he is all alive to it. A change of heart is his object ; and every tendency to such a change,

every symptom of softened, spiritualised feelings, is to him more precious than the wealth of worlds. It is in prayer—whether it be in the closet or in the heart—that such emotions are chiefly felt; and the emotions themselves, if genuine, have the very character of prayer in them. In fact, the spirit of prayer is the spiritual Christian's element; were this to be extinguished, his mind would be like the animal in the exhausted receiver. A sense of God, and of divine things, is that to his soul, which animation is to his body; and the habitual devotion of the heart is, in spiritual life, what the action of the lungs is in corporeal life; as Herbert beautifully says,—“God's breath in man returning to its birth.” Faith, therefore,—that divine and yet most rational faith already described,—acts most radically by prayer; and in this way, chiefly, it generates love, and also strengthens itself. To him who “prays to God always,” divine objects become more and more impressive on the mind and heart,—which is the growth of faith; as well as more and more attractive to the imagination and affections,—which implies advance in love. Prayer, therefore, must be the chief nourishment of that religion, which St. Paul makes essentially to consist in faith working by love.

“That method of strengthening faith,” says Addison, “which is more persuasive than any other, is an habitual adoration of the Supreme Being, as well in constant acts of mental worship, as in outward forms. The devout man does not only believe, but feels there is a Deity; he has actual sensations of him; his experience concurs with his reason; he sees him, more and more, in all his intercourses with him; and, even in this life, almost loses his faith in conviction.” (Spect. No. 465.) Is there, then, any

comparison, on the whole, between the merely rational, and the spiritual Christian? between the cold, superficial, unsuccessful strivings of the one, and the animating, heart-engaging, efficacious, devotion of the other? How weak, on the one hand, is that man's support, how limited his resources, who knows no aid, beyond the natural effect of his own reasonings, and his own exertions! How consolatory *his* views and reflections, who knows, from his own experience, that, if he be not wanting to himself, his habitual sense of divine things is always capable of being so quickened, as to make him equal to any trial, superior to any calamity; and that his faithful and earnest prayers for such assistance can never be wholly ineffectual! He is, on the contrary, accustomed to such happy excitations; therefore, he goes with filial confidence to the divine mercy-seat, for "grace to help him," whether against sin or suffering; and the results are such as to satisfy him, more and more, that he is actually within the sphere of God's paternal influences, and a participant of that divine, unextinguishable, beatific life, whose source is hid with Christ in God.

May we not, then, truly say, that he, who lives such a life, is master, not only of himself, but of the world? "All things are your's," says St. Paul, "whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, — all are yours." He has human feelings like others, and is equally susceptible of pain and pleasure, but (once more to use the noble language of Addison), while "he reflects upon his own weakness and imperfection, he comforts himself with the contemplation of these divine attributes, which are employed for his safety and his welfare. He finds his want of foresight made up, by the omni-

science of Him who is his support. He is not sensible of his own want of strength, when he knows that his Helper is almighty. In short, the person who has a firm trust on the Supreme Being, is powerful in his power, wise by his wisdom, happy by his happiness. He reaps the benefit of every divine attribute, and loses his own insufficiency, in the fulness of infinite perfection." (Spect. 441.) I will conclude my remarks with a passage, with which Saurin begins one of his sermons; and which, I conceive, falls in most appositely with the substance of what I have been saying: —

"It is very important that we should know the reasons which ought to attach us to religion. It is much, to be capable of deducing, with justness and precision, the arguments which prove virtue preferable to vice. It is much, to be able to go from principle to principle, from consequence to consequence, and to say to oneself, from a full persuasion of the excellence of piety, I judge a good man to be happy.

"But, however well fitted this path may appear for conducting to the Deity, it is not always sufficient: reasonings may refute the pleas of our passions, but they are not always strong enough to repress their force: powerful as such demonstrations may be, in a book, in the school, or in the study, they prove weak, and their point is blunted, when they are opposed to strong sensations, whether painful or pleasurable. The reasons which may be urged for suffering on account of religion, lose much, if not of their clearness, at least, of their efficacy, when they are offered to a man about to be broken alive on the wheel, or to be roasted on a gridiron. Arguments for resisting the flesh, for rising above sense and

matter, too generally vanish, when even the baits of pleasure are presented to our view. How much, then, is he to be pitied, who knows no other method of approaching his God than that of discussion and argumentation.

“ There is a far more certain path for conducting us to the Supreme Being, and a far more certain method of confirming our communion with him, than that which we too generally have embraced : I mean, that of relish and sentiment. Happy is that Christian, who, in his conflicts with the enemies of his salvation, can oppose pleasures to pleasures, delights to delights; the pleasures of prayer and meditation, to the pleasures of the world,— the delights of silence and retirement, to the delights of gaiety, of dissipation, of grandeur : such a man is fixed in what is right, by the very bias of his nature. There is only need of the common feelings of human kind, to make a man love the source of his joys. Such a one is attached to religion, by the same powerful motives, as bind the people of the world to the objects of their passions : the love of pleasure being not less a tie, in the one case, than in the other. Such a one will never yield wholly to temptation ; because, according to the expressive language of an apostle, ‘ the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, guards all the avenues to his heart ;’ that is, it counteracts the seductiveness of temptation, by the far higher delight with which it fills the soul.”

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ON THE SITUATION AND PROSPECTS OF THE  
ESTABLISHED CHURCH.

MY DEAR ———,

Bellevue, June 4. 1816.

I HAD begun a letter to you, but was deterred from proceeding, by seeing your name amongst arrivals at Bath. I learn this morning, by a letter from ———, that you went merely for a few days, and on an occasion for which I am sincerely sorry, though glad to know that there have been such speedy signs of convalescence.

I feel, with you, that the times are pregnant with new events, and that the Church of England is likely to undergo unprecedented trials. I confess, however, the modified adoption of the proposition respecting tithes, by Mr. Vansittart and Lord Castlereagh, and even Sir William Scott, was rather more than I should have looked for; and Mr. Peel's wish that the project should extend to Ireland, on the ground of the Churches being now united, vexes me more than I can express. It bottoms a rash speculation, on a basement of absurdity. How are the two Churches one—except in the arbitrary, impractical position of the articles of union? In political matters, union between the countries has been substantiated by effective arrangements; in the ecclesiastical instance, it consists solely in a gratuitous assertion, to which every circumstance in both Churches gives self-evident contradiction. To lay stress on

this asserted unity, therefore, as a reason for including both churches in all measures of ecclesiastical legislation, is worthy of a statesman, who thinks, that multiplying schools, and distributing tracts, will cure the long-rooted and long-rankling malady of this mysteriously afflicted and miserably ill-managed country.

It cannot be dissembled, that, in what concerns the Established Church, the House of Commons seems to feel no other principle, than that of vulgar policy. The old high Church race is worn out. The conscientious members are too generally under an opposite bias; and the majority are mere men of the world, if not men of yesterday, and, therefore, on every account, "caring for none of these things." So soon, therefore, as the majority of the active public (which, unfortunately, is a very different thing from that of the thinking public) are seen to desert the church, the House of Commons will, I suspect, no longer shelter her. The crisis may be resisted, for a time, by the still remaining habits of the House of Lords; but it can be only for a time. And who can say to what political results, even such a temporary effort may lead? The House of Lords and the Established Church are specially united to each other. They fell together before; and it would be hard to imagine, how the one could long continue to exist, without the other. In truth, we actually see the reverence for both aristocracies (the ecclesiastical and the political), scarcely by slow, but certainly by sure, degrees, going down together; and, amongst other causes, this similar one has clearly operated in both, that the aristocratic character has been injured by a neutralizing blendure; that is, by making men of low descent, Peers, and by making men of low Church principles, Bishops.

Whether an opposite course, in either case, would have averted the catastrophe, amid the present providential changes in society, I will not presume to say. But, that the present state of things, in our twofold constitution, is, in part, attributable, to the choice of Bishops since 1714, and to the choice of Peers since, at least, 1783, might, I think, be not hard to demonstrate.

But, according to my creed, things are what they are, because God has willed them to be so. It was Providence which left an open path for John Wesley and George Whitfield to commence their career ; and (as if still more to facilitate their work) placed in the see of Canterbury a corrected dissenter, all whose habits and feelings, inclined him to forbearance, and almost to indulgence. But, how remarkable, that, at the same time, two disorganizers, of a completely evil kind, should be exerting, in their bad way, like zeal in France ; and that they too should be sheltered and countenanced by the ruling powers, until their influences diffused themselves through the great body of society, so as to produce those consequences which the world has witnessed. At length it begins to be felt, that what the two emissaries of Satan effected, respecting Christianity and social order in France, the two contemporary instruments of mysterious providence have been doing, little less effectually, respecting the church establishment in England. The two results have not coincided as to time ; and it probably would not have suited the views of overruling Wisdom, that they should : it was no doubt necessary, that England should remain undisturbed within, until she had been the means of restoring order to the world. But, that the deep anti-ecclesiastical spirit, which has been working for half a century, and now works more strongly and extensively, and on a higher



level than ever, will go off in mere noiseless, insensible evaporation, is more, I confess, than either the reason of the thing, or the signs of the times, authorise us to conclude.

But, amid these apprehensions, I am comforted by the persuasion, that, whatever befalls the English Church, will be for its greater good. If “gold be tried in the fire, and acceptable men in the furnace of adversity,” it is natural to suppose a like discipline necessary, for the perfection of collective bodies, and corporate institutions. Such has been the lot of the church at large; and the same may, of course, be reckoned upon, in its subordinate portions, and perhaps the more, in proportion as they partake of the essential spirit of the whole. That the Church of England eminently possesses the spirit, we are happy to be assured; but that she has yet attained the faculty of diffusing it through her members, daily experience forbids our asserting. No church on earth has more intrinsic excellence, yet, no church, probably, has less practical influence. Her excellence, then, I conceive, gives ground for confiding, that Providence never will abandon her; but her want of influence, would seem no less clearly to indicate, that Divine Wisdom will not always suffer her to go on, without measures for her improvement.

Temporary adversity is that, to which, in all such cases, as far as we know, the providence of God has hitherto resorted; and we can form a clear idea of the manner in which a temporary depression of the English church, might exalt its moral qualities. It is now an object with worldly men, for the sake of worldly considerations:—“The birds of the air come and lodge in the branches.” Let, then, its worldly honours and opulence be withdrawn, and its adherents will be those

alone, who love it for its own sake. "The hireling will flee, because he is an hireling." But the genuine votary will not only "stand in the evil day," but he will experience affections of which till then he was unconscious. The Church of England has hitherto been too prosperous to call forth our finest feelings; where there was nothing but wealth and power, tenderness and sympathy could have no place. But generous minds would contemplate their dismantled church, with sensations never felt before. It was in Babylon, during the Jewish captivity, that the full gush of affection began to flow toward the land of their fathers; then, for the first time, their hearts glowed and melted, at the thought of Jerusalem. I cannot doubt, that a depressed state of the English Church, would excite similar affections in numbers, who now act from habit, without any conscious feeling. In fact, it is from mere habit, that, perhaps, ninety-nine out of one hundred, have belonged to the Church of England; whereas, in her depression, her members would naturally ask, why they adhered to an unpatriotised, probably unpopular, interest? In making this enquiry, they would discover what till then they had overlooked; and the Church of England, in her lowliness, would become the object of intelligent love, incomparably beyond what she had been, in the days of her brightest sunshine.

But I conjecture, that other valuable results, perhaps not otherwise to be arrived at, are to be hoped for from the apprehended reverse. Hitherto, the Church of England, though more temperate in her measures than any other portion of the reformed body, has manifested no sentiment with such unremitting intensity, as dread of whatever could be deemed popery. I deny not the expediency, perhaps

necessity, of this feeling, in such circumstances as have hitherto existed. But it has given safety to the Church of England, at the expense of perfection ; which last can be attained, only by proving all things, and holding fast what is good ; and this discrimination can be practised, only in the absence of prejudice. As matters are, dread of transubstantiation, has made the sacrament a ceremony ; and, to ward off infallibility, every man has been encouraged to shape a creed for himself. The most certain cure for this extreme, will be to experience its fruits. Another fall by dissenterism, will make it be felt, that, if Popery can be a Charybdis, there is a Sylla, on the other side, not less dangerous. But it will be still more useful to learn, that, in the mixed mass of the Roman Catholic religion, there is gold, and silver, and precious stones, as well as wood, hay, and stubble ; and that every thing of the former nature is to be as carefully preserved, as every thing of the latter nature is to be wisely rejected.

This was the principle on which our Reformation commenced ; but, as Dryden remarks in his Preface to the *Religio Laici*, it “ was continued by Edward VI. on other principles than those on which it was begun.” The line, thus made to diverge, has, since, again and again, been bent inward, but always with extreme caution, lest apparent ground should be given, either for the alarm of the timid, or the outcry of the zealous ; I doubt not, that it was thus strictly ordered by Divine Providence ; the purposes of which might, for a season, require preponderance of pure Protestantism, even though a lower rate of pious excitement, within the establishment, should be the consequence. But a most remarkable fact is, that the greatest bend was given to the line, immediately

after the period of deepest depression. The distress of the English Episcopal Church, during the Usurpation, had more than ever endeared her to her genuine children; and the hand which inflicted the discipline, served to abate all undue protestant zeal. A revision, therefore, of the Liturgy, being called for, the revisers seized the opportunity (contrary to what the public was reckoning upon) to make our formularies not more puritanic, but more Catholic. They effected this, without doubt, stealthily, and, to appearance, by the minutest alteration; but to compare the Communion Service, as it now stands, especially its rubrics, with the form in which we find it previously to that transaction, will be to discover, that, without any change of features which could cause alarm, a new spirit was then breathed into our Communion Service, principally by a few significant circumstances, in the manner of conducting the business, which were fitted to impress the devout, though certain to be fully understood only by the initiated.

Who can doubt of this transaction being, in all its bearings, providential? And yet it was clearly insufficient to produce any extended or striking effect. It has actually escaped general observation. Wheatly on the Liturgy, notices the changes; but, though himself a high Churchman, overlooks their import. Nichols, if I remember right, scarcely adverts to the fact; and Shepherd, who meant to take pains, seems not to have known any thing of the matter. What, then, can we suppose, but that those changes were meant by Providence to subserve ulterior movements; to lie dormant, as it were, until nearer "the time of the end," — when it might suit the order of Providence that what was before deposited as seed, should grow up into a rich and luxuriant harvest. But how, so naturally, can we suppose this result to be ac-

complished, as by a repetition of a process, which produced the pledge and outline? If a remarkable disengagement from the prejudices of high Protestantism, through a painful experience of its unchecked tendencies, was necessary to form instruments for that incipient correction of antecedent excesses, is it unreasonable to conjecture, that the agency destined to carry on, what was then begun, will be trained to its vocation by a similar instruction? The dread of Popery, and the consequent prejudice against every thing vulgarly branded with that stigma, is even more powerful now, than when England was alarmed by the prospect of the Spanish match; and among those, who, if an opening were given, would think themselves solely qualified to mend the Established Church (I mean the persons called Evangelicals) the antipathy rises to rancour. Nothing, therefore, would be less conceivable, than that, if a revision of the Liturgy were undertaken now, the line pursued, or the result accomplished, would resemble, in any respect, what was done in 1662. In fact, without other lights, and other tastes, than we see at this day in any quarter, the work would be done mischievously, or done at random.

But, were the Church of England once more to fall, through the efforts of Protestant assailants, a new view of things would infallibly follow. The causes of the downfall would be sharply and deeply investigated, and much would be seen, till then unattended to, both in the friends and in the enemies of the Church, which would serve to account for the catastrophe. There would be no motive, in such a state of things, to escape truth; there would be every motive to discover it, and circumstances, past and present, would reflect it upon them, like so many mirrors. It would not be strange, if there were a rebound of

feeling ; a self-reproach, for having been so hostile to Roman Catholics, and so unsuspicious of Protestants. This took place, in the former depression, to such a degree, as to suggest strong wishes for reunion with the Roman Catholic Church. William Forbes wrote his Dissertations, and Herbert Thorndike his *Weights and Measures*, with the prospect of effecting such a measure, on terms not wholly inconsistent with their Church-of-England feelings. This, however, was visionary : it was, in truth, the fruit of despair ; and, perhaps, cherished by insidious assurances from Roman Catholic emissaries. At this day, whatever self-crimination there might be for disproportionate dislike, there could be no thought of re-submitting to the long-dissolved chains. At that former period, mental liberty was little understood ; having been scarcely asserted by churchmen ; and claimed, as if only to be abused, by dissenters. But since that time, it has grown into a nature, in Church-of-England men ; and though they may have much to learn, in order to the wise and happy exercise of their liberty, it is morally impossible, that any combination of circumstances should inspire the remotest thought of abandoning it.

They would, therefore, I persuade myself, reject as much as ever the bondage of the Roman Catholic Church. They could do no other, in this advanced state of intellectual society, than “ stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made them free.” But this very firmness in their own Christian privileges, would qualify them for an unprejudiced view of the system, by which they were no longer in danger of being enthralled. In an earlier stage, the fence of prejudice might be necessary, in default of settled judgment. But when internal principle is established,

external restraint may be withdrawn. And were prejudice wholly gone, what copious matter for profound, and interesting study, would that wonderful concrete of truth and error, of greatness and meanness, of beauty and deformity, the Roman Catholic Church, afford! Viewed from without, and indiscriminately, nothing, having the Christian name, could be more uncouth or revolting. Still, under that rubbish, must be all the rich results of a providential training of Christ's mystical kingdom, for fourteen centuries; that is, from the close of the canon of Scripture, until the Reformation. Perhaps some of the grossest errors might, on close examination, be found to point us to valuable, but hitherto neglected truths; and we should possibly, in several instances, discover, that there was a providential necessity for questionable practices to continue, until there was a disposition, somewhere, to extract the entire spirit, from the unworthy, but, till then, indispensable vehicle.

As an instance of this latter kind, I would name auricular confession. Whatever evil consequences may be charged upon this practice, one undeniable good has resulted from it; namely, a more exact and experimental acquaintance, with the movements of the human mind in religious matters, than we see attained, by any who have wholly abandoned this species of discipline. I say, wholly abandoned; because various Protestant sects have resorted (some statedly, as the Wesleyan Methodists in their class meetings, others occasionally, as the Independents and Anabaptists in their admission of members) to practices not wholly of a different nature. And it cannot be denied, that, in every such instance, we find a more marked attention to the interior effects of re-

ligion; though always with such weak, and not seldom with such dangerous, mixtures, as to make it extremely difficult, in the most candid reckoning, to separate the good from the evil. Here, therefore, we are, perhaps, more aided and instructed by judicious Roman Catholic writers, and those ancient authors to which they introduce us, than by any other means of information. In these, we find the interior piety, at which sectaries aim, not only elucidated and exemplified, but learnedly examined, and judiciously guarded. What, in too many amongst us, becomes fanaticism, in their more excellent writers, employs, and makes alliance with philosophy; and, at the same time, what ensures sobriety, promotes elevation. The whole mind is provided for and occupied, by an adequate extent and depth of principles; and a solid breadth of foundation, admits of a lofty superstructure.

The want of this interior learning amongst us, has produced lamentable consequences. Those movements of piety, which belong to the mind and heart, have been rather suspected and discountenanced, than explained or cultivated; until, from its being caricatured by vulgar advocates, inward religion is little less than systematically exploded. It is in this spirit, that the present champions for what they think high Church orthodoxy, are combating their "Evangelical" opponents. They involve in their attack, all that is venerable and valuable, with that which is really exceptionable, and justly to be resisted; and, in doing so, they preclude all aid to their cause, either from Divine Grace, or from human nature. Both these, as far as in them lies, they resign over to their adversaries; for Divine Grace is likeliest to act, where its effects are most acknowledged; and human nature will be



most attracted, where the fullest provision is made for exercising its affections.

Were these men acquainted with the chain of traditional truth, which Divine Providence kept unbroken through the darkest ages, they would discover in the prayers which they continually read or hear, the well-digested substance of that, which (certainly in an ill-digested form) they combat and vilify. They would find, to their confusion, that Gregory, the chief author of those prayers, was, what they, in their ignorance, would call a Methodist : that is, one who prized, and cultivated, and dwelt upon, in all his discourses and writings, those interior effects of Divine Grace, which designate their nature to the happy possessor, by a strength, which no mere human effort could possess, and by a purity, of which God only could be the Author.

Until our churchmen make this discovery, they will injure what they mean to defend. And how are they to make it, unless under the teaching of some impressive circumstances? Would any thing, then, be so likely to enlighten them, as a state of things, which would at once force them to look for moral resources, and dispel the cloud of prejudice which now hangs between them, and the quarter where the fittest subordinate aid for their purpose, is to be sought for, and, by wise selection, sure to be obtained.

It is remarkable, that the ancient prayers of our Liturgy have been successfully imitated, only by our reformers, and by our revisers ; and, perhaps, the imitation of the former was scarcely so perfect, as that by the latter. Such attempts have failed, almost so universally, as to make the exempt cases appear wonderful. It would be easy to show, that the success attained at the Reformation, can be resolved only into

deep and cordial intimacy with the early fathers of the Church ; and it cannot be doubted, that the divines who revised the liturgy in 1662, had not only, during their depression, entered more deeply than ever before into the spirit of the established formularies ; but also, had employed themselves in exploring those rich mines of antiquity, from which the precious specimens in their hands had been extracted ; and in which, of course, they were sure to find, what would inexpressibly reward their labour. In this way only would they have been inclined, or enabled, to accomplish what they performed ; by such training alone, could they have been fitted to compose the Collect for Easter Eve ; or for the sixth Sunday after Epiphany. Were the same depression to be again permitted, can it be questioned, that the same pursuit of moral support would again occupy, the humbled and unsecularized priesthood of the English Church ? The taste once revived, its due sustenance would not be difficult to find. It would not be looked for in any of those quarters, from whence had proceeded the causes and means of the calamity. The ancient stock, from which our Church derived her best being, and which would then be regarded as the ground of her dignity, would be instinctively resorted to for relief and compensation, against contemporary unkindness, and the scorn of successful rivals. And were such a habit once established, to what heights of excellence and wisdom might it not lead ! If, under deep moral disadvantages, the Church of England has produced numberless specimens of the meekest wisdom, and the most amiable goodness, what might not be looked for from her, when she should be as gold tried seven times in the fire ?

Such are the considerations by which I comfort

myself, against events which I think I see approaching. In the present state of things, wherever we look around, we see error or deficiency. The Prayer Book is used, without being felt; the Bible is distributed, without being understood; and religious controversy becomes more and more rancorous, while neither party distinctly apprehends the nature of the dispute, nor the strict points to be established. And yet, what a treasure is in that Prayer Book! What a mine is in that Bible! and how interesting might even the existing controversy be made, if it were pursued with moral taste, and by the light reflected on holy Scripture from concurrent antiquity. Shall, then, the present negligence and insensibility always prevail? This cannot be: the rich provision made by the grace and providence of God, for habits of a nobler kind, is evidence, that those habits shall at length be formed, that men shall arise, fitted both by inclination and ability, to discover for themselves, and to display to others, whatever yet remains undisclosed, whether in the words or works of God. But if it be asked, how shall fit instruments be prepared for this high purpose, it can only be answered, that, in the most signal instances, times of severe trial have been chosen for divine communications. Moses—an exile, when God spoke to him from the bush. Daniel—a captive in Babylon, where he was cheered with those clearest rays of Old Testament prophecy. St. John—a prisoner in Patmos, where he was caught up into Heaven, and beheld the Apocalyptic vision. Reasoning, then, from analogy, would it not seem probable, that the brightness of truth reserved for the latter times, should be similarly enhanced, by some antecedent or concomitant darkness of circumstances; and also, that those destined to the highest trusts, in

the diffusion of that light, should be prepared for their office in some such manner, as was exemplified in those most favoured luminaries of the ancient world.

My own idea of what is to be brought forth, makes me think that the blessing could not be too dearly purchased. My persuasion of the radical excellence of the Church of England, does not suffer me to doubt, that she is to be an illustrious agent, in bringing the mystical Kingdom of Christ to its ultimate perfection. Her history, hitherto, seems marked by providential interferences, only less remarkable, than the miraculous interpositions in the case of the Jews. Arguing, therefore, from every feature in the case, I think an approaching depression more than probable ; but I cannot doubt that the end will be glorious. I imagine the approach will be slow : several years may yet pass, before the last act of the drama ; and, when the event comes, if things were only left to take their natural course, circumstances here might differ greatly from those in England. There will be a great difference, in spite of Mr. Peel's tampering ; but if he, and such as he, were to withhold their hands, the Church of Ireland would, perhaps, subsist, like Noah's ark in the deluge. I must stop.

Ever yours,

ALEXANDER KNOX.

## LETTER TO JOSEPH BUTTERWORTH, ESQ.

MY DEAR MR. BUTTERWORTH,

I HAVE been wishing to reply to your last kind letter, ever since I received it ; but various little obstacles concurred to produce a delay. I am two or three letters in arrear to different persons ; but I will begin with acknowledging my debt to you.

The part of your letter which relates to Mr. \*\*\*\*\* pains me sincerely. I have not shown my regard to him as I ought, not having written to him, as I should have done ; but I can truly say, I esteem and love him to a very special degree. With much comfort, therefore, shall I hear that his fears respecting his daughter have subsided, and with real sorrow shall I learn the contrary. In truth, I am cordially attached to him and his ; he being such, in my mind, as I have met not a great many equals to.

As to the effect of my sentiments upon his conduct, I am ready to account for all in which I can be justly responsible ; but I think it likely I am charged with more. You can easily conceive, that I would hardly advise another to do that, which I do not do myself. Now, most certainly I do not withdraw myself from society : on the contrary, I give myself very much to it, and I think it my bounden duty to do so. In fact, I make it a point to lose no opportunity of talk-

ing to those who will talk with me ; and I have no inclination to go one step farther into the desert, than I have already done.

It never, therefore, was my wish, to make good and wise Mr. \* \* \* \* a recluse ; but it was my wish, and I avow it most openly, to lead him to employ the invaluable rest of the Lord's day, in " communing with his own heart in his chamber," according to the counsel of the Psalmist, rather than in a busy bustle of Sunday-schools, &c. &c. I never recommended to him to quit being a Methodist class leader. I considered the situation, well managed, as highly useful ; and regarded him as qualified for it. But, with all that, I did endeavour to impress on him, that, to keep his own vineyard, was his first and great concern, — neglect in which could never be compensated for, by the most assiduous attention to the vineyards of others. I doubtless, also, did imply, in many parts of my conversation with him, that it was not by very great frequency of formal religious acts, that religion would, as I conceived, be best carried on in the world. I said, (it may be, more than once,) that I thought religion, in order to thrive, needed to have less of body, and more of spirit ; and, possibly, I said, for I thought, that, directly religious performances were but equivocal expressions of religious principle ; and that, therefore, a man might preach more effectually, by his evenness of temper, purity of conduct, and obvious superiority to the world and the flesh, than by all possible exertions of a more direct and explicit kind.

Beyond all this, I do not think I went with Mr. \* \* \* \*, except in my endeavours to re-unite him to the establishment ; which, to be sure, were cordial and continued on my part ; though, to this hour, I know not what effect was produced in him. But this

I can say, that my endeavours of this kind were the result of no bigotry, no blind prejudice, as I believe ; but because I conceived the mind, and taste, and heart of Mr. \* \* \* \* \* to need something solid, and dignified, and cheerful, like himself ; and, when such was my persuasion of him, to what quarter could I point him, but to the worship of the Establishment ? particularly as it was his providential profession. To this point I still adhere ; and I could almost wish it were possible for me to put on paper, on this subject, all that is in my heart : suffice it to say, that, when I thought I could prevail on this point, it would be a matter of conscience with me to make the trial ; because, though I give the Methodists, (as I have known them, for, you know, English Methodism has grown out of my knowledge,) all credit for making first impressions, I cannot regard them as equally fitted for leading the true Christian onward. In theory, I own, they maintain Christian perfection ; but, I doubt the tendency of their common methods of piety, to multiply living instances of it. It is my humble opinion, that, in pursuing this latter blessing, it is more indispensable, that a man should act for himself, and use his own faculties, than in coming at the lower blessing. In this last, the man is generally more passive, being acted, in a good degree, upon ; the work going on pretty much in a way of sensation, and, perhaps, a good deal of emotion. In the higher work, there must, I take it, be more self-direction,—more united application of all the faculties of the mind,—more reflection than sensation ;—by which, however, sensation itself becomes purer, and more refined, by being made more and more steady,—more blended, and, in a manner, identified, with spiritual wisdom, so

that to think and to love, seems to be nearly one and the same.

This last idea, is so finely given by Whichcote, that I cannot but transcribe his words : — “ Man is not at all settled, or confirmed, in his religion, until his religion is the self-same thing with the reason of his mind : that, when he speaks reason, he speaks religion, or, when he speaks religiously, he speaks reasonably ; and his religion and reason are mingled together ; they pass into one principle ; they are no more two, but one ; just as the light in the air makes one illuminated sphere, so reason and religion, in the subject, are one principle. ”

Now, I honestly acknowledge, that the plans and means of Methodism, in this latter great department, do not appear to me to be equal to the doctrine of Methodism, respecting the attainment itself : they seem to me to have been much better witnesses for the truth of the thing, than guides to the possession of it. As I have said to you before, so say I now, he that desires and is pursuing this blessing, must rather seek it in his closet, and in his heart (for, to the steady pursuer of this, his heart becomes more and more his closet, though to no neglect of stated retirement), than even in the assembly of the righteous. He will not forsake this. In one way or other, he will still, as he is situated, cultivate the communion of saints. But, when he takes an active part, it will be to *do* good, rather than get good ; and, when he is a hearer, it will be to him, perhaps, more a recreation and exercise to his mind, than a means of grace. Doubtless, to such an one, “ all things work together for good.” But, I am ready to think, that, to a person who is much occupied in inward converse with God, there is something felt of comparative exterioration,



in most of the more public means. They will not, when good in themselves, be disrelished on this account; but, as I said, they will seem something more like recreations, and pleasant exercises. Not but that sermons of a wise, advanced Christian, into which the rational warmth of his own heart would be transfused, and in which the depths of experimental holiness would be feelingly laid open, would be most noble aids: but, how rare are these instances! and even these would have their chief effect, by whetting the appetite for that yet more interior work, which the mature Christian carries on, for himself, in the secret of his heart.

If you have Flavel's Works, see what he says on this interior work, in his "*Touchstone of Sincerity*," chap. ii. sect. 2., in the four paragraphs which begin with "Fifthly."

Now, I own, that, by the effect produced here, I estimate every thing in religion; and I depreciate outward engagements, only so far as they may prove hostile to this "one thing needful." I similarly value means, that I find particularly conducive to this; and, on this ground peculiarly, it is, that I value the Church-of-England service, and endeavoured to make Mr. \* \* \* \* \* do so too; — because it brings the very sum and substance of perfect piety continually before our eyes; because it can deceive us by no fermentitious feeling; but can be felt at all, only by our vital love for the matter it contains; which, again, is so excellent, as necessarily to be felt, in spite of repetition, — as the Lord's Prayer is felt, if the heart be right. Thus, it continually puts the healthiness of our spiritual appetite to the test, by letting us see how far we can relish a long meal of the purest, but the plainest, spiritual food. It adds to public worship,

the simplicity, and individual retiredness, of private prayer ; because, not even the speaker (he giving you nothing of his own) is a necessary associate with you, in your mental acts. When, therefore, the mind does enter into this work, and does set itself to draw in, and digest, the manna of the Sunday morning service, I do think it is as sober and deep a means of grace, as it is well possible for a human being to make use of ; and, as I said, eminently favourable (as it strikes me) to him who would “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour.”

I am not perfectly sure but the Methodist system had in it, at all times, an activity above the strict line of wisdom, — I mean, that its plan had in it always too much of a kind of bellows-blowing method ; which was always in danger of degenerating into self-pleasing ; and which, also, perhaps, retarded the progress to perfection, by infusing an infectious and excessive preference of social piety. But, in former times, there was much to counteract these evils : the activity itself was pious ; it had direct spiritual edification for its uniform object ; and, therefore, where the heart was already devoted to God, it could retain its simplicity, and pursue its own improvement, amid its various exertions. Of this, the Life and Journal of Mrs. Elizabeth Johnson, of Bristol, give an impressive instance. But, I am not inclined to believe, that the activities of the modern English Methodists, are so directly spiritual, as those of their predecessors ; nor, I must think, is the animating spirit of the general system, by any means, what it was. It altered, even during Mr. Wesley’s life ; as his journals clearly manifest, and his own last two or three expostulatory sermons evince. I cannot think it has improved since. For these reasons, therefore, I would urge

upon every right-minded individual, who should fall into my way, to cultivate a closer intercourse with God himself, than with any class or number, however respectable or well-intentioned, of frail and mutable mortals. I would be far from advising any man to break connexions once fairly formed; but, I would advise him to keep an independent mind, — not to trust in man, nor to call any man, or men, Rabbi; nor to be, on any pretence, however plausible, “careful and troubled about many things;” but ever to feel, that “one thing is needful:” to wit, “My son, give me thy heart.”

As to John Smith, I never have considered him as a complete teacher of evangelic truth. I am most sure of a fact stated by Mr. Wesley, in the beginning of his sermon on the Lord’s vineyard, that the same teachers have hardly ever equally excelled, in teaching first principles, and in leading on to perfection. In fact, I think, the two departments have required, hitherto, two sets of workmen, as I have named them to you more than once, — foundation men, and superstructure men. The former, teaching how to become Christians; the latter, teaching what Christians should become. Now, I consider John Smith as a noble superstructure man, but a poor layer of foundations. In fact, he does not attempt it. The Puritan Nonconformists, on the other hand, were good foundation men, but poor hands, in general, at superstructure work. I, of course, sincerely value both; and, standing at the point to which, I humbly trust, God has brought me, I prefer superstructure men, above foundation men. But, to show you that, in this preference, there is neither prejudice nor partiality, I will also say, that, if I were now in an unrenewed state, and could, in that state, have the light I have now, and it

were necessary for me to take either the one or the other,—I would then, and in that case, on the whole, rather have the foundation men, than the superstructure men; because the superstructure men could not teach how to become a Christian; and, I would surely rather be possessed of the lowest substance of Christianity, experimentally, than contemplate its sublimest height, with merely philosophic rapture.

With respect to myself, I conceive Mr. \* \* \* \* \* has been a little misled by appearances. I neither exactly owe to Mr. Wesley, what he thinks I do; nor, I trust, am I ungrateful, for what I do owe him. Whatever I have gained of true peace, originated in the teaching, not of the Methodists, but of my own mother; who was uncommonly fixed in strict religion, before she ever heard a Methodist, except Thomas Williams, when she was very young. She it was, who, when severe affliction came upon me, urged me to pray, and induced me to read the "Pilgrim's Progress." Thus a feeling grew up in me, which years of subsequent deviation did not wholly destroy. When this feeling was more strongly revived in me, it was through the very hand of God himself; who, without the intervention of human means, awakened me from the sleep of my soul in a moment. Then, I own, I received some aid, not to be forgotten, through a Methodist preacher. In deep misery of mind, I went to talk with one who was near; and, while he talked with me, the painful hardness, I felt within, relaxed, and a disposition to pray sprung up in me, which I have never since lost. After this, I often attempted to get good by means of the Methodists; but in that single instance could I note any express benefit. Indeed, it seemed rather to be otherwise. The methods of Methodist piety were so

much pointed to present effects, to the producing something *now*, that they seemed, when at all resorted to, to disturb my animal spirits too much. I remember feeling this effect particularly at Liverpool, after having spent an entire Sunday amongst the Methodists there. The next day it was that I made the remark : and it seemed plain to me, that a quieter, more equable, more gradual course, was the one indicated for me to walk in. That was in 1802 ; and nothing has occurred since, to alter that persuasion.

Yet, I trust, this cautionary conduct, to which, no doubt, my prevalent tastes have accorded, has not made me ungrateful, for what I really owe to the Methodists in general, and John Wesley in particular. For the attention I have ever received from them, and specially for the invaluable regard of individuals, I trust I am cordially grateful. But, more than this, whatever I may think of particular excesses or defects, or however I may conceive first principles to have been, in certain instances, departed from, I shall ever consider Methodism itself, as to its substance and essential features, one of the most remarkable wheels in the great machine of the divine economy. What Mr. Wesley has done, not in every instance, but in main points, implies more important advancement, I conceive, than existed before, and such as, I trust, no unhappy retrogradation shall ever do away. But I never called Mr. Wesley, Rabbi ; I maintained my differences in some instances, to himself ; and have by me the copy of a long letter I wrote to him, four and twenty years ago, on what I thought crude and unintelligible, in the Methodist mode of speaking of faith. Still, however, I must express my persuasion, that, in the very pith and marrow of Mr. Wesley's views, and in those matters which

through life he most prized, most dwelt upon, and which lay nearest his heart, there is not one of his own nominal followers, who agrees with him more identically than I do ; and I must add, that, at this day, there are none I meet, except a few of my own intimate friends, (if I am even to except these,) that agree with me more perfectly, than wise, pious, experimental Methodists.

In all visible things which relate to our higher interests, there is a body, and a spirit ; and, according as the minds of individuals are formed, they will be more engaged by the one, or the other. All minds, while themselves embodied, need some kind, or degree, of embodying, in the object which is to attract them ; but, evidently, some much more, and others much less. To this variety, then, I conceive, the form of all means of mental and moral good, in this world, is wisely and graciously adjusted. Like the gathering of the manna, every thing is so contrived, that each honest mind finds what it needs. He who requires sensible excitements, is furnished with them in the degree in which he wants them. He whose habits are more purely mental, has it also in his power, to pass by what is more fitted to animal nature, and catch the spirit of the thing in itself, without those palpable and tangible adjuncts, which to him would be incumbrances.

But I also believe, that, where a collective and combined effect is to be produced, there, peculiarly, must the system of means be rendered palpable and tangible. Spirit and truth, alone, will not give a common feeling to a mixed number, because nine out of ten are too much animalised for this. They must have common objects, adjusted to their commonest feelings. For this, then, I think, divine.

wisdom has made ample provision, both by the immutability of character which is given to essentials (in virtue of which, they retain their own nature, in the midst of the most various mixtures), and by the unrestrained liberty which is allowed in circumstances; in consequence of which, all collective bodies have been left instinctively to adopt those adjuncts, which were best fitted to their situation and taste; and therefore, perhaps, most suitable to their providential destiny. In the great bodies of national establishments, this permission of Providence has led to one set of diversified results; in sects and societies, it has led to another set. Perhaps, scarcely in any one of them has free agency exactly fallen in with the line, that Divine wisdom would have drawn; but neither, I conceive, in any of them, have the ends of divine goodness been wholly frustrated.

For whom, then, are these embodying systems most intended? Evidently, for those who most need them; and, accordingly, we see, that, in general, in proportion to the need of them, is the attachment to them. They who do not need them, will consequently less value them. They may use them, from habit, on account of their supposed general usefulness; or, from deeply engaging associations of ideas; or, from some intrinsic pleasantness or worth: and it may be right, and perhaps a real duty, in the individual, to yield to these attractions, especially when in this very path he first found substantial good, and, possibly, in a measure, still finds it; yet, as I said, he will, in proportion to his strength of mind, his habit of self-direction, and, along with these, his depth of pious sentiment, be, at bottom, independent of all such circumstances, and will, if he observes himself attentively, feel more and more that he is so.

If this, then, be the case with strong-minded, wise, steady Christians, even in the midst of the very circumstances I allude to, how much more must this independence of mind be felt, where an individual has been led out of the world, into the ways of God, without the aid of any system of outward means whatever? This, most certainly, has been my case; and, I acknowledge, I account it a very valuable blessing: for, being bound to nothing, I seem to myself to have access to the spirit of every thing. Let it not appear arrogant in me simply to say, that, it is as if I saw, from a high ground, variously fenced-in paths, in a valley below, where safety is secured, and guidance obtained, at the expense of confinement and coercion in various ways; in all which, Divine Providence seems most wisely to have consulted for the diversified exigencies of weak mortals; and to have also, in each set, some special movement at work, which shall have its effect on the general object. Now, among these fenced-in paths, that formed by John Wesley interests me peculiarly. I contemplate it, in its original design and scope, as a particular result of overruling wisdom and goodness. I consider even the adjuncts of the system, as unusually well adapted, to the best interests of those who embrace it; but its ruling and animating spirit, I admire and love cordially, and, I may, I hope, say, sympathetically. I feel thus toward it, for the very reason that Mr. Wesley states in his sermon (already referred to) on ‘the Lord’s vineyard;’ because never, elsewhere, except in the Apostles themselves, and in the sacred books they have left, were the true foundation, and the sublime superstructure of Christianity, so effectually united.

See now, exactly, how my mind is disposed. With



the spirit of genuine, original Methodism, I rejoice that I am acquainted ; but to Methodism itself, as a body of persons, and a scheme of rules, I rejoice that I am not bound ; for this amongst other reasons, because, were I in subjection to the body, I might, perchance, be in more danger, than I trust I am, of losing the spirit. Bodies are varying ; and the spirit that was once pure in them, becomes adulterated, or neutralised, before they are aware. I conceive, I, who look to the spirit only, and am not tied to the body, am more likely to retain, unmixed, that, about which alone I am concerned, and from which there are no varying circumstances ready to seduce me.

But would I, for this reason, wish to dislodge individual Methodists from their connexion with that body ? I must first be sure whether they would go on without it. Perhaps, the very practices, which would be unsuitable to me, may be necessary for them. I will, therefore, take away no man's crutch, when I cannot be sure of his ability to walk without it. I will even, when occasionally led to such a thing, attempt to take up tares in the individual with caution, lest I should pluck up the wheat with them. They who cannot guide themselves, must have some direction. They who cannot live alone, must have religious society, were it only to guard them against the attractions of irreligious society. Never, I think, were such wants better provided for, than in John Wesley's original system.

But respecting those who, though connected with that system, could guide themselves, and could walk alone, or choose select companions ; such as yourself and Mr. \* \* \* \*, and, probably, several others, what would I wish ? — Certainly not, for one moment, to separate you from your present connexion ; for how

is that connexion to be made what it should be to the weak and ignorant, who need it, but by a competent intermixture of the stronger and more knowing, who, though not needing it, are needed indispensably by it? But this I would do,—I would, as I saw it needful and hopeful, warn such persons against a needless forfeiture of their own mental privileges. I would lead them to regard even their connexion itself, as a matter of judicious compliance with the indications of Providence, showing them what was best and most useful for them, rather than as of essential obligation; and, therefore, to view all their special ties, in strict subordination to catholic principles, and the most extended good. In a word, as I wish, for myself, to imbibe and possess the pure spirit of Mr. Wesley's Methodism, without adopting practices which would unnecessarily abridge my present Christian liberty, so I would simply wish to lead intelligent men amongst the Methodists, to imbibe and possess the spirit of that free and catholic view, which rises above all little distinctions, without, at the same time, drawing them from any instance of duty, marked out for them by the apparent guidance of Providence.

I conceive such a temper of mind as this, to be the more necessary for such persons, at present, as new and more advanced operations of divine wisdom may be at hand, for which the liberal and catholic frame, which I am recommending, may be the most suitable preparative. Versatility is, doubtless, the mark of mental weakness; but over-attachment, and the estimating things beyond their value, is no less so. Means, of whatever kind, are valuable only as they serve their end; and, therefore, while ends are immutable, means are ever varying. There has

evidently been, since the eighth century, a succession of collective systems, like that of Methodism ; all of them, doubtless, providentially suited to the existing circumstances, and all answering a useful purpose. Of these, I am inclined to think John Wesley's Methodism has been the very best ; but, still, it is one of a series, of which each preceding variety has performed its revolution, and left room for a successor. A due impression of this uniform course, I humbly conceive to be necessary, in order to make adherence to any individual system, wise and profitable ; that is, to distinguish such adherence from prejudice or superstition, such as the Jews retained for their superseded law, to the no small injury of Christianity in general, and their own enjoyment of it in particular. There was a time, when the strictest and most devoted adherence to the Mosaic Law could not have been excessive ; but, when a change took place in the divine method of acting, that zeal, which once would have been piety, became little less than the resisting of Omnipotence. I cannot but think, that almost all plans, and institutions of a religious kind, which have existed from the day of Pentecost to the present hour, have had in them a nature somewhat common with that of Judaism. I mean, that what I have called the body of the system, has been formed of temporary and evanescent materials, fitted to serve the purpose for a time, and then give way to something better and more mature. That the prejudiced adherents of each respective system, should be sensible of this, was scarcely to be expected ; but some, of a more extended reach of mind, have always been impressed with this idea. Thus, for instance, when Robinson, the Independent, was taking his last farewell of his congregation, who were embarking in a body for

America, in 1620, he said to them, “ If God reveal any thing to you, by any other instrument of his, be as ready to receive it, as ever you were to receive any truth, by my ministry ; for I am verily persuaded, the Lord has more truth to break forth out of his Holy Word. For my part, I cannot sufficiently lament the condition of the reformed churches, who are come to a period in religion, and will go at present no farther than the instruments of their reformation. This is a misery much to be lamented ; for though they were burning and shining lights in their times, yet they penetrated not into the whole counsel of God.” In what precise sense these words were meant, by him who used them, I will not undertake to say ; but that they contain a general truth, of ultimate importance, I entirely believe.

To one less candid than yourself, I might appear, in the above observations, to bear too hard upon the present state of Methodism. You will recollect, however, in the first place, that I do not mean to apply what I have said, in the way of blame or censure ; but merely to state, under correction, my notion of existing circumstances ; and, in the next place, let me direct your attention, to the conclusion of Mr. Wesley’s sermon on, “ Is there no balm in Gilead ? ” If you compare what I have said above, with the dismal language of the passage I refer to, I think you will allow, that the declension which I have deemed probable, Mr. Wesley, even then, considered as in progress.

There is something else, however, in that passage, which adds importance to this point. Mr. Wesley is so impressed with the symptoms of increasing worldliness, which he sees amongst his more opulent followers, that he not only despairs of Methodism, but very

nearly of Christianity itself. "How astonishing a thing," says he, "is this? How can we understand it? Does it not seem (and yet this cannot be) that Christianity, true, scriptural Christianity, has a tendency, in process of time, to undermine and destroy itself? For wherever true Christianity spreads, it must cause diligence and frugality; which, in the natural course of things, must beget riches; and riches naturally beget pride, love of the world, and every temper that is destructive of Christianity. Now, if there be no way to prevent this, Christianity is inconsistent with itself, and, of consequence, cannot stand, cannot continue long among any people; since, wherever it generally prevails, it saps its own foundation."

Now, my friend, if this reasoning be well founded, I ask you, was ever any thing more awful? Mr. Wesley, after labouring, as no man since the Apostles had done, sees, at the last, so little permanent result, that he begins almost to question, whether the religion of Christ can be that which it has been taken for, — whether, instead of being proof against the gates of hell, it does not contain within it the principle of its own destruction. "If there be no way," said he, "to prevent Christians from growing worldly, Christianity is inconsistent with itself." And, in the next paragraph, he declares plainly, that he knows but one possible way, — to wit, the giving away money as fast as it is gained; a thing which, I conceive, every thinking man would pronounce to be utterly out of the question; consequently, the dilemma in which Mr. Wesley places Christianity, is left in its full force. How highly the enemies of our divine religion would be gratified by this, and how

much they would triumph in it; as coming from so eminent a person, I leave you to judge.

Mr. Wesley's deep persuasion, of the declension which he saw among the Methodists being inevitable, in such circumstances, appears with additional clearness, in what he says respecting the Puritans. I transcribe the passage entire, as it not only gives a strong representation of what has doubtless frequently happened, but also seems to express, clearly, what Mr. Wesley thought he saw actually taking place before him.

“From the time,” says he, “that riches and honour poured in upon them that feared and loved God, their heart began to be estranged from him, and to cleave to the world; no sooner had persecution ceased, and the poor, despised, persecuted Christians were invested with power, and placed in ease and affluence, but a change of circumstances brought a change of spirit. Riches and honour soon produced their usual effects : having the world, they quickly loved the world. They no longer breathed after heaven, but became more and more attached to the things of earth ; so that one who knew and loved them well, Dr. Owen, deeply lamented over them, as having lost all the life and power of religion, and being become just of the same spirit, with those whom they despised as the mire in the streets.”

That Mr. Wesley's facts are as he represents them, must be admitted ; every society, of the stricter sort, in the world hitherto, having doubtless waned and decayed in this very manner. How, then, are we to escape the deplorable inference, which he draws from these facts ? Only, I conceive, by rising, at least in mind, out of that valley of which I spoke some pages ago, and contemplating the prospect which a higher

ground of truth affords. We shall, then, see, that what has taken place in such societies, need give no alarm respecting the Church at large; that these societies have been but a part of the Divine economy; most probably, a temporary part; and certainly, though hitherto the largest, not the strongest, part: true piety, having never wanted votaries of another species; fewer in number, but more mature in quality; an attention to whose character, circumstances, and apparent providential destination, is self-evidently essential, to our forming any satisfactory idea, of the entire movements of the church militant, or of the Divine counsels respecting it. At first view, I might appear fanciful, in what I now assume; but, I conceive, that a fact stated by Mr. Wesley himself, and already referred to in this letter, bears me out in it. He tells us, that the same persons, have very rarely been equally clear, in their views respecting justification, and sanctification; and he adduces Martin Luther, as an instance of clearness, respecting justification; but of extreme darkness, respecting sanctification: and Francis de Sales, and Juan de Castaneza, (two eminent Romish spiritualists), as equal instances, of clearness, respecting sanctification; but of great darkness, respecting justification. If this, then, has been, as Mr. Wesley (I believe with great justness) supposes,—if the distinction has been always observable, and nearly universal (which it must have been, if, as Mr. W. states, “very few were clear in their judgment, respecting both”), it follows, necessarily, that there have been two distinct classes, or species, of Christians, agreeing in the substance of inward religion, but differing much, in the degree in which they sought it, and in many of their circumstantial views respecting it; and that both these classes, or

species, must be distinctly attended to, and taken into account, if we would form, either a correct estimate of what has been the state of the Church hitherto, or a probable calculation of what it is to be hereafter.

But, can those two classes, which Mr. Wesley distinguishes, be seen, with like distinctness, in the retrospect of church history? The attentive reader of theology may discover, what Mr. Wesley has discovered; but, is there any visible or striking difference, in the characters and circumstances of the two descriptions, which makes it possible to contemplate the persons themselves apart, and to compare them, as one species with another? To this natural query, an answer seems to me to be furnished, by a remarkable observation of Mr. Milner, in his history of the Church, when speaking of the commencement of the reign of the Beast; which he places about the year 727. "It was evident," says he, "that (at this time) the face of the whole Church was altered. We must now look for the real Church, either in distinct individual saints, who, in the midst of Popery (and, of course, still more probably in less corrupted establishments), were preserved by effectual grace, in vital union with the Son of God, or in associations of true Christians, formed in different regions, which were in a state of persecution and much affliction." Now, I believe it will appear clearly, on attentive observation, that the outward and visible distinction, pointed out to us by Mr. Milner, and the more inward and less visible difference, stated by Mr. Wesley, have, in the general, strictly coincided with each other. I mean, that Mr. Wesley's teachers of sanctification, have, at all times, and with few individual exceptions, been found, among Mr. Milner's distinct individual saints, living in establishments; and that the teachers



of justification, have, almost uniformly, either been found in,—or have proceeded from, or been connected with,—one body or other of Mr. Milner's associated Christians.

If this be a nearly uniform fact (and I do not recollect any evidence which does not serve to confirm it), I leave it to your sober judgment, whether it is not worthy of the deepest and most serious consideration. Nothing is more clear, than that, when Mr. Wesley expressed those gloomy apprehensions, quoted above, he fixed his view on associated Christians only; for to these alone, his language is applicable. But, if what has just been stated be fully founded, Mr. Wesley's reasonings are happily inconclusive; as derived from a view, not of the whole, but one portion only, of the resources of Christ's militant kingdom. If his own distinction be just, he ought evidently, and, I conceive, in a peculiar manner, to have kept it in sight, on the occasion now referred to; because, if the teachers of sanctification—of progressive and matured holiness—be left out of the account, will not the main strength of piety, and, of course, the chief pledge of its increase, either in the individual, or in the world at large, be left out along with them? And yet, if these teachers have generally been found, not in associated bodies, but in unconnected distinctness, within establishments, they are most clearly left out; for, in all Mr. Wesley says, either about the declension, or spreading, of true Christianity, he so confines his calculations to social systems, as not even to intimate any other species of instrument.

I grant, that this was very natural in Mr. Wesley, who was himself the former of the best system of the social kind, that the world had seen; and who, notwithstanding the evils he saw and lamented,

had also witnessed the most blessed and happy effects, attending the whole course of his long labours. It was also to be expected, that, looking back on what had been done in times past, his view would be most engaged, by movements resembling his own. Besides, there is a visibility in all such movements, which does not belong to distinct individual Christians. The personal character, or the written labours, may be celebrated; but the good done by such instruments, is, in its extent, open only to the eyes of God, and his holy angels. I do not, therefore, wonder, at Mr. Wesley's oversight. But, I deem it an omission, which needs to be supplied, were it only in consistency with the single fact, stated by himself, of a distinction of teachers; the connection of which fact with that stated by Mr. Milner, and the strict coincidence of their respective distinctions, will, I believe, become more evident, the more the subject is examined.

Nothing, however, is farther from my thoughts, than to lessen the importance of associated bodies. I have expressed an opinion, above, that they are a temporary part, and (even in the mean time,) not the strongest part, of the Christian economy. But, hitherto, they have been the working part; and, to them, in their wonderfully continued succession, is to be attributed the quantity of true Christianity, which has been kept up, from age to age, in the visible Church. Besides, it was in this form, that Apostolic Christianity itself appeared; and every successive social system, of the kind I am speaking of, has, during the season of its first purity, exhibited a sort of renewal of that, which we read of in the Acts and Epistles. Here, therefore, in an eminent sense, "the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of

thee ; nor the head to the feet, I have no need of you." — Our Saviour himself has foretold, that, in consequence of first-invited guests refusing to come to the heavenly feast, a supply of persons, to fill the house, must be drawn from the streets and lanes of the city, and even from the highways and hedges. That is, as I conceive, so long as the wise, the educated, the providentially favoured, refuse to avail themselves of the blessings of the Gospel, the invisible Church must be kept up, in sufficient magnitude, from the ignorant, the illiterate, the indigent. Of these, sects and societies have been, as it appears, the appointed, and, certainly, the effectual, gatherers. They have been the bringers-home of prodigals ; — in a word, they have been the grand depositaries, and dispensers, of those influences of the Gospel, by which they, who had been as sheep going astray, are brought back to the shepherd and bishop of their souls. I can truly say, both my head and heart are inclined to give them their full honour ; and to contemplate with delight, the successive harvests of genuine Christians, which they have been the means of gathering into the garner of God. Why, then, have I pronounced them a temporary and weaker part of the Divine economy of the Church ? I wish you here to understand me clearly ; because (as I have already observed) if I am right in my idea, the point is of infinite importance. I deem them the weaker part ; because, though they are powerful in numbers, they have never been strong in principle. Mr. Wesley's incontrovertible observation, that they were heavenly-minded, so long only as they were persecuted, and that they began to love the world, so soon as they possessed it, evinces their radical want of strength ; because, it shows that, even in their best times, they were

less indebted, for their well-being, to their principles, than to their circumstances. So soon as these changed, they themselves changed also ; and, therefore, it seems, that, having been successively necessary to the great designs of Heaven, Providence so ordered, that, in every instance, affliction and persecution should attend, to keep them during the season of their appointed ministration. But, this being once accomplished, providential barriers have been removed ; the common course of things has taken place ; and the declensions, described by Mr. Wesley, have as uniformly been the consequence.

But, how strictly correspondent was all this, with their view being confined to first principles ? These are strengthened, instead of being shaken, by adverse circumstances. Persecution raises, at once, the babe in Christ, into a hero. If conversion be real, however crude or indigested the ideas, the subject of it is forthwith ready, perhaps then readiest, for cruel mockings or scourgings, for even bonds, imprisonment, or death ; and, while these stimulants continue to operate, they keep up the flame. But, growth in grace,—the leaving first principles, and going on to perfection,—alone gives security against the deep, stealthy, insensibly growing evils of a prosperous condition. It is not fervency of affection, that will do here. This will be formed by circumstances ; and, it will gradually yield to circumstances ; and he, in whom it has once grown languid, will, too probably, find himself at a loss how to get it revived again. He will, probably, feel regret, perhaps grief of heart, because it is not with him, as in times past. But, it will be well, if these sensations do not, by degrees, give way to very different ones ; to the saying, in a still less wise sense than that of the

Apostles, "it is good for us to be here." They, and they only, are proof against these seductions, who advance, from spiritual infancy, to full age;" and "who, by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."

I acknowledge, with pleasure, that such individuals, are not absolutely wanting in associated bodies; because, doubtless, each member of such a body, may always do that for himself, which his system will hardly do for him. His own wisdom and enlargement of mind, may raise him above, what I have already called, the Judaism of his distinct party; and bring him into a clearer light, and purer air. But have these instances been very numerous? If they had been, would there have been room, for Dr. Owen's, and Mr. Wesley's, melancholy statements?

If we turn our view, then, from the associated, to the distinct, individual Christians,—from the teachers of justification, to the teachers of sanctification,—do we meet with much to console us? We meet with nothing, as I said, that could, hitherto, have been a substitute for the other; we meet with what is limited in number, and what, therefore, never could have checked the torrent of vice, which has flowed down from one generation to another; nor do we meet with that contagious piety, which strikes from breast to breast, and penetrates numbers at once, as has been, perhaps, more or less the case, in most of the associations of Christians, while in their first earnestness; and in none, except at Pentecost itself, more pure, or more powerfully, than when J. and C. Wesley first began their truly wonderful career. These, unquestionably, are not the distinguishing marks of those of whom I now speak; but they have had this high honour,—I do not say exclusively,

but, I may say, eminently, — that, in them, the power of Christianity, to rise above prosperity, has been as clearly exemplified, as, in the associated class, we have seen its triumphs, over adversity : for it is an obvious fact, that most of the individual saints — the teachers of sanctification — have been strangers to open persecutions ; and have generally spent their whole time in this world, in the very circumstances, which Mr. Wesley considers so eminently dangerous, or, rather, so inevitably pernicious. They have become religious, amid the very snares, which have drawn other religious persons from their integrity. “ By riches,” says Mr. Wesley, “ I mean not thousands of pounds, but, any more than will procure the necessities of life. Thus, I account a man rich, who has food and raiment for himself and family, without running into debt, and something over. And, how few are there in these circumstances, who are not hurt, if not destroyed, thereby ! ” This would be terrible, if it were universally true ; but, I conceive, the whole class I speak of, serve to demonstrate, that, where such disastrous effects seem to arise, from such moderate competency as that described by Mr. Wesley, the real cause of the evil must be traced to something else than the outward circumstances ; since it will be found, that the general condition of eminent individual saints, has been much more above, than below, Mr. Wesley’s standard of riches. Numbers of such persons have been high, both in rank and fortune ; and most, either by ecclesiastical benefices, or personal property, have been affluent ; and, yet, they did not love, that world which they possessed.

I grant, that, in the Romish Church, they often embraced voluntary poverty ; but this, however erroneous, was a consequence of their piety, not a

cause of it. Yet, even here, such renunciation was not deemed necessary. I should think, the most truly spiritual (such as Francis De Sales, and Fénelon) urged it least. "My design," said the pious De Renty, to a lady of rank, "is not that you should demolish your walks, or let your gardens run into a wilderness: the ruins I speak of, must be made in our own minds, not executed on things insensible. "When I say, we must set all on fire, my thoughts were to follow that admirable spirit of the Apostle, who would that we have poverty amidst our riches, and divestment in the midst of our possessions: he means, that our spirit should be thoroughly purified, and separated from all creatures; and, that there should not be, in our hearts, any other inclinations, than those of Jesus Christ, who saw all this world without destroying it, but, withal, without cleaving to it." In our Protestant establishment, voluntary poverty has been dropped of course; but, we have not wanted our proportion of distinct individual saints, who have demonstrated, how possible it is, to use the world without abusing it. It would really seem, that the Church of England was peculiarly formed to be, among Protestant churches, the chief scene of this very kind of trial. The dignities, titles, and emoluments of our establishment, obviously constitute as severe a test of virtue, as the mind of man could well be tried by; and, that these objects minister fuel to the wrong passions of thousands, must be admitted. But, have they not also been the means of raising many a mind, to a higher pitch of self-conquest, than could have been readily attained, in less perilous circumstances? It is eminent excellence, only, that is a match for such temptations; and, whatever calls forth its efforts, increases its strength.

I wish to speak of our Church of England divines, exactly as they deserve ; and, whether we go to the lives, or writings, of those to whom that appellation most strictly belongs, I conceive we find a class of men, complete parallels of whom, could hardly be elsewhere discovered. In them, reason and piety, liberality and strictness, the truest philosophy, and the simplest faith, the deepest seriousness, and the happiest cheerfulness, form an unexampled combination. Doubtless, there have been many as conscientious ; but, never before, since the days of the apostles, does the energy of divine grace appear so united with the ease of nature.

I have already, however, hinted at a deep deficiency in these excellent men, when I spoke of John Smith ; for, what I said of him is certainly applicable, in some measure, to them all. I trust, I delight to ascend with them, to the height of their superstructure ; but, I should wish to go deeper than they do, in laying a foundation : and I cannot but rejoice, that, while I value these unfeignedly, I have known another class of workmen. Still, to those who have learned first principles, these truly great men teach lessons, which none else, that I know of, are equally competent to afford them. There is, in them, a rationality, an equability, a luminous cheerfulness, a sober elevation of mind (like what is said of Hezekiah, that “ his heart was lift up in the ways of the Lord ”), and, I must add, a peculiar liberty of thought, and undaunted range of intellect, — as if they fully felt, that there was nothing in Christianity to subjugate or control right reason, but every thing to elicit and ennoble it. The mere teachers of converting truth, have, with few exceptions, been inflexibly solemn and severe ; and, if they are not impassioned, they



generally become dry. Tranquil ardour, and calm animation, are seldom their properties. It must be owned, that their special function does not tend to place them at their ease; their post being, like that of Aaron (when the plague was in Israel), "between the living and the dead." Besides, being much more impressed with the deep disease of human nature, than with its healthful capabilities, they think of true piety, only as of a continued conflict with natural corruption; and as an unequal progress (if a progress) in a slippery and difficult up-hill path, to which our entire nature is incurably adverse, and, in which, our hearts alone, without other enemies, are sufficient, ever and anon, to drag us backward. It is in these respects, especially, that the Church-of-England divines form a contrast. They admit, that our nature has become the slave of sin, and that nothing but the grace of God can disenthral it; but, they maintain, also, that, when it is fully disenthralled, it feels that it has recovered its own proper state, and is restored to its own native element; in which it lives and moves, not as if transported into a foreign land, but as in the sphere, which is congenial to all its radical tastes and faculties. This, that I have now mentioned, formed the great distinction, between Augustine and Chrysostom; and, to this day, it is that which gives a difference of character, to the feelings, language, manners, — may I not add, even looks, — of their respective followers. My great comfort, on this point, is, that what is deep in Augustine, may be united, with what is sublime in Chrysostom. I agree much with the former, in what is necessary for the first overcoming of the original, and, too generally, aggravated, disease; but, I no less agree with the latter, and his admirable followers, in the subsequent health

and strength of which our nature is capable. Even here, however, I am not extravagant: were I in danger of becoming so, my own feelings would correct me.

The wonderfully enlightened Baxter, in speaking of perseverance, says, that, "where faith hath kindled so much love, to God, and heaven, and holiness, that it is become a divine nature in the soul, and operateth, as the love of children to parents, above mere reason, as a fixed habit, like a nature; then, grace seemeth, to some, confirmed, and not loseable." Be the last idea true or false (though I hope and trust it is true), the description given here, seems to me exactly to express what the writers I refer to dwell upon; and what, consequently, makes them valuable and interesting. Let me just exemplify this, by a few instances.

"Some there are," says Bishop Taylor, "who dare not sin: they dare not omit their hours of prayer, and they are restless in their spirits, till they have done; but they go to it, as to execution; they stay from it, as long as they can; they drive, like Pharaoh's chariots, with the wheels off, sadly and heavily. But, he that is grown in grace, and hath made religion habitual to his spirit, is not at ease, but when he is doing the works of the new man; he rests in religion; and comforts his sorrows, with thinking of his prayers." Again, "I call that an infallible sign of a great grace, when a man is prepared against sudden invasions of the spirit, surreptions, and extemporary assaults. Many a valiant person dares fight a battle, who yet will be timorous and surprised in a midnight alarm. He that does not start, when he is smitten suddenly, is a constant person; and that is it which I intend in this in-

stance,—that he is a perfect man, and well grown in grace, who hath so habitual a resolution, and so unhasty and wary a spirit, as that he decrees upon no act, before he hath considered maturely, and changed the sudden occasion into a sober counsel.”

One might almost ask, which is here most to be admired, the sentiment, or the expression?

The excellent Worthington, in his well-known treatise on Self-resignation, uses these expressions: “Self-resignation, is the way to true rest, — an holy rest; to the sabbath of the soul, as St. Austin calls it. If thou wilt enjoy the true rest, and keep the inward sabbath, thou must not do thine own ways, nor speak thine own words, nor find thine own pleasure (to borrow those words, in Isaiah lviii.): thou must cease from thine own works, as the phrase is, Heb. iv. 10.

“As the soul groweth in resignation, it returns more to its rest; it comes to be more as it would be, by being more restored towards its original constitution, its first state. The resigned soul enjoys religion, in all the sweetnesses and privileges thereof; it is prepared to taste, and see how good the Lord is. To him that overcometh (that overcometh his own will, those lusts that war against his soul), shall be given the hidden manna; and the white stone, with a new name written in it, known by him, only, that receiveth it; and a stranger intermeddleth not with his joy. Such a one hath meat to eat, which the world knows not of, and is fed with the food of angels.

“There is, indeed, pain, in the first tearing off our wills from those things they cleaved and stuck fast to. As it is said of the milch kine, that drew the ark; their calves being shut up, they went lowing,

all the way that they went to Bethshemish. So it is with souls, in their passage to resignation ; — they, then, parting with what was dear to them, fondly beloved, and eagerly pursued by them ; with that, in fact, which was their life and nature. But they are no sooner arrived at this state, but the bitterness of death is past, — the bitterness of the death of the old corrupt man ; the hour of travail is over, and they remember no more the anguish, for joy that the new man, created after the image of God, is born within them. They have broken through the difficulties of the way, are got out of the wilderness, over Jordan, and their feet are on the Holy Land, — the land of righteousness and peace. Henceforth, the ways of religion are not (as before) grievous, but paths of peace, and ways of pleasantness ; flowery and sweet, rosy and soft ways. Religion, is now become their temper, constitution, and life ; and sin is grievous, strange, and hard to them. 'Tis not so troublesome to them, to be patient, as to be passionate ; to forgive, as to revenge. Humility, is more easy to them than pride ; chastity and purity, are more sweet than lust and sensuality. The inward voice of such a soul is, ' I delight to do thy will, O my God ! '

“ There is no such liberty, as to be free to good, and enlarged to spiritual obedience. He that is so, hath an empire within him ; he is in his own power ; he hath victory over the world, — both the good and evil things of it ; his mind is unhampered, disentangled, and set loose ; and it is lord over those, whom, before, it obeyed. And what a glorious conquest is this ! ‘ There is no victory more glorious,’ says St. Cyprian, ‘ than that whereby we become conquerors over inordinate affections.’ ”

I need not observe to you, that resignation, throughout this treatise, means devotedness of heart.

I need not quote to you, from John Smith's writings; because you are fully aware, that all his treatises have this maturity of Christian piety as their common object; but, I will transcribe what is said of him, in the sermon at his funeral, by Bishop Patrick.

After observing, that it was his constant endeavour, to turn the fierce and consuming fires, which he saw around him, into benignant and kindly heats; that thus persons might warm, not scorch, their brethren, he proceeds:—

“And, from this spirit, together with the rest of Christian graces that were in him, there did result a great serenity, quiet, and tranquillity, in his soul; which dwelt so much above, that it was not shaken with any of those tempests and storms, which use to unsettle more low and abject minds. He lived in continual sweet enjoyment of God; and so, was not disquieted with scruples and doubts of his salvation. There was always discernible in him, a cheerful sense of God's goodness, which ceased not, in the time of sickness.”

I cannot but add a passage, from a much more modern character; because it is so very beautiful in itself, and so much to my present purpose. It is part of the account which is given of Bishop Benson, in Porteus's life of Secker: but it is not written by Porteus; he acknowledges having received it from another hand.

“He was, from his youth to his latest age, the delight of all who knew him. His manner and behaviour were the result of great natural humanity, polished by a thorough knowledge of the world, and

the most perfect good breeding, mixed with a dignity, which, on occasions that called for it, no one more properly supported. His piety, though awfully strict, was inexpressibly amiable. It diffused such a sweetness through his temper, and such a benevolence over his countenance, as none who were acquainted with him can ever forget. Bad nerves, bad health, and naturally bad spirits, were so totally subdued by it, that he not only seemed, but, in reality, was, the happiest of men. He looked upon all that the world calls important, — its pleasures, its riches, its various competitions, — with a playful and good-humoured kind of contempt; and could make persons ashamed of their follies, by a raillery that never gave pain to any human being. Of vice, he always spoke with severity and detestation; but looked on the vicious, with the tenderness of a pitying angel. His turn was highly sociable; and his acquaintance very extensive. Wherever he went, he carried cheerfulness and improvement along with him. As nothing but the interests of Christianity and virtue seemed considerable enough to give him any lasting anxiety, so, on the other hand, there was no incident so trifling, from which he could not raise amusement and mirth."

I meant to have transcribed but the former half of this passage; but, I could not stop till I had written the whole. This leads me to mention him from whose life I take it (Secker); who, though far from being a genuine specimen of the true Church-of-England school, in his writings, generally, — yet has said some things, which show how much he had caught of the spirit I am speaking of, though, in circumstances peculiarly unfavourable to such a view: being bred a dissenter, when dissenterism was in its deep decline; and, having come into the Establishment at a time

when its real principles were least insisted on. He had, however, (as his letter to Dr. Watts, when at Mr. Jones's academy, shows) caught a sincere, though I should rather think, tepid piety; which, I am sure, he never lost. His theology (an odd mixture of semi-Calvinism and Dr. Waterland's new views of regeneration, &c.) evidently had no tendency to heighten his practical principles. If, therefore, he did actually grow in spiritual wisdom, I conceive, it must be resolved into that secret, but deep influence, which the permanent properties of the church he had united with, would naturally, — perhaps, rather, infallibly, have on a mind, which was more than usually serious, sagacious, and candid. You may think this a partial way of reasoning; but, mark well my grounds:—I see other persons, as serious as Secker, apparently not inferior in talent, and like him in general turn of mind, but continuing dissenters. I see these, I say, sinking into Socinianism, or Arianism. For instance, “modest Foster,” as Pope calls him, Lardner, Grove, Amory, Benson, Taylor of Norwich, &c. &c. &c. Doddridge escaped; I may, hereafter, ask, why? But look at the produce of his academy! What was even Job Orton? His letters, published by Palmer, throw no little light on this point. Can we, then, reasonably suppose, that, had Secker remained among these persons, he would have escaped so general a contagion? I fear, neither his piety was ardent enough, nor his original views of Christianity clear and digested enough, to have secured his orthodoxy. Watts was ardently pious; perhaps, however, from native and juvenile warmth, rather than from having been very deeply impressed. Be that as it may, he evidently slid from devotional subjects, (on which, I suppose, he felt he had

said all that he well could say — a most natural consequence of his being only a theologist of first principles,) into metaphysical and miscellaneous researches, for making his way through which, he seems not to have had either sufficient strength, or boldness of mind; and, the result is, that we, at length, find him in as pitiable a puzzle, as any good man, not out of his reason, was ever brought into. See what I allude to, in the last article of the seventh volume, of the late edition of his works. But Secker, (being, as I said, most upright, solidly sagacious, weak in no instance,—only, I must again observe, of natural coolness of feeling,) comes into a situation, where a set of solemnly settled, primitively orthodox, sublimely spiritual, nobly rational, and delightfully cheerful formularies, occupy continually his ears, his lips, his thoughts. His coolness might prevent a high and striking effect; but, I conceive, his better qualities would insure a substantial one; and, that such an effect was produced, I think my short quotations will fully show.

To these remarks, it might be objected, Why, then, did not the Establishment preserve its own native children, from becoming Arians or Socinians? How did it come to have within it, a Clarke, and a Hoadley, formerly; or, latterly, to send forth from it, a Disney, and a Lindsay? To this, (on such an occasion as the present,) I can only answer, that there are minds, which no circumstances will guard; that Clarke and Hoadley seem never to have been capable of feeling, the peculiar excellencies of our liturgical forms; and, that Disney and Lindsay had, probably, never examined them, with any other than an hostile purpose. On the other hand, we have proof, lasting and copious proof, that Secker studied them, atten-



tively, and affectionately ; had compared them with ancient liturgies ; had candidly weighed objections ; and gave as good and sufficient answers to them, as, I presume, the case required. He has left no less than five sermons, expressly on this subject ; besides an introductory one, vindicating forms of prayer in general.

To return, however, to the direct effect produced on Secker's mind, I conceive, I see, in these sermons on the Liturgy, though but in one or two instances, an actual exemplification of what I have been, all along, assuming,— I mean, the tendency of our Establishment to promote the higher views of piety. The two short passages are very simple ; and would be passed by, if they were not pointed out. When speaking of the *Te Deum*, he says, “ To him, therefore, our Mediator at the right hand of God, and who shall come to be our Judge, we address our prayers, that, as we magnify him day by day, (and let us take care to make good that assertion), so he would keep us this, and every day, without sin ; restrain us from offending through infirmity, as far as will be really for our inward benefit, but, especially, from wilful and presumptuous transgression.” Again, on the latter collect, in the Morning Service, he says, “ It begs the protection of God more especially for the present day, which the former begs in general ; but, above all, that we may fall into no sin, even undesignedly, much less ‘run into any kind of danger of it, wilfully, but do always what is righteous in his sight.’ ”

Now, brief as these remarks are, do they not show, that the peculiar features of the Church of England, did not escape Secker's attention ? Do they not evince, that he was impressed with them, and engaged

by them, as much as could be expected, in one so entangled in low and dry theology? And, do they not contain seeds or elements, which would naturally expand into the following very beautiful passage (the commencement of his sermon on Matth. v. 6.):—

“ Whatever objections the vain or vicious make against religion, they must allow, if they have any regard to truth remaining, not only that nothing else promises happiness hereafter, but that nothing is so likely to give happiness, even here, as that disposition of mind, to which religion proposes to bring us:—for he who loves God sincerely, and obeys him willingly, and trusts in him cheerfully, who delights in doing justice, and showing goodness to his fellow-creatures, and takes pleasure in regulating his conduct by the dictates of reason and Scripture,—studying to be useful in his station, and keeping his heart shut against hurtful indulgence, while he opens it, in a proper degree, to every innocent gratification,—hath, unquestionably, the truest enjoyment of his being that is possible. He destroys not his health by intemperance, nor his fortune by extravagance, nor his character by criminal or mean behaviour. He generally obtains esteem and friendship; and he always feels the most comfortable testimony of his own conscience. Whatever he denies himself, or parts with, it is for a valuable consideration,—the discharge of his duty:—whatever he suffers, he escapes the greatest of evils,—remorse and shame,—and he enjoys the greatest good, a conscious sense of the Divine favour, conducting him graciously, through the afflictions of this life, to an endless felicity in the next, that shall be the more abundant for them. And where shall we find upon earth, a securer, an easier, a more joyful situation? Right actions, it must be owned, are often

accompanied, in the beginning of a Christian course, with great inward struggles ; but they diminish continually, in proportion as a right temper is formed ; and, when we arrive at a proper maturity in goodness, we shall be entirely free from difficulties, and absolutely at peace."

The whole passage is excellent in its way ; but it is chiefly for the sake of the last few lines, that I have transcribed it. You see, here, that very view, which I have supposed to distinguish the distinct individual Christians, from associated Christians, and which, certainly, does distinguish Mr. Wesley's teachers of sanctification, from his teachers of justification, expressly insisted on. But, I wish to give you some of Secker's latest thoughts, respecting the extent to be given to the terms he uses, of "right temper," and "proper maturity in goodness."

In a letter to Bishop Hildesley, occasioned by a publication of the Bishop's, Secker says, "Piety, in its true sense, is the first and great commandment. Many think external observances in religion to be piety : and too many, [think piety] to consist in the exercise of reverential affections towards God, though it prompt very little, if at all, to imitate his moral attributes and obey his injunctions, in relation to their fellow-creatures, and to the government of their own minds, in ordinary occurrences. Perhaps, they are induced, by this regard for God, not only to abstain from gross vices, usually so called, but, to do acts of charity, also, and to contribute to religious uses ; and so far is well ; but, by no means, do they sufficiently consider their obligations, as extending to every thing, in every part of life, and in their own breasts, in which there is a right and a wrong. And hence, they conceive themselves at liberty, in point of

conscience, to act as they will, in multitudes of instances, where they act very much otherwise than they ought.

“Therefore, I wanted your Lordship to add a fourth conference, to the three you have already written, for the purpose of saying more explicitly, and dwelling more upon it, that religion extends its authority to every thing ; to the most worldly, the commonest, the lowest things ; and binds us to behave reasonably, decently, humbly, honourably, meekly, and kindly, in them all ; and that interfering so far, instead of being a hardship, is a great blessing to us, because it interferes always for our good.”

I need hardly point out this last paragraph to your particular attention, as I am sure you will feel it to contain as great a fulness and excellence of sense, as could easily be couched in so many words. I own, I never met with any thing of the kind, that seemed to me to contain so much, in so small a compass.

I have now given you enough of quotations ; and, on a review of them all, I leave to you to judge, whether they do not appear to warrant my supposition, that our Church has a peculiar aptitude to lead its distinct individual Christians, to peculiarly rational, equable, deeply settled, and unlimitedly influential views of piety ; and whether, altogether, it does not present somewhat of a different species of piety, from what even the best and most upright sectaries have been used to exhibit in their writings ? In a word, whether these latter do not, comparatively, occupy themselves, in furnishing milk for babes ; while such writers, as those I have transcribed from, afford food fit for those, who would be perfect men in Christ, thoroughly furnished and instructed unto every good work ?

When, however, I speak of sectarian teachers not having insisted on these higher views, I mean to make a general statement, admitting of individual exceptions. But still, I have my doubts, whether such exceptions, would not oftener strengthen, than weaken, my main position. For example, when I find a pious Puritan betake himself to such views, as a *last means* of checking a spirit of retrogradation and declension, is not the felt occasion for this, a confirmation of what I have said, of the general weakness of such men's principles, to lead their people onward? and is not the instructive adoption of such principles, as I have been quoting, an unbought testimony to their importance and efficacy?

You will observe, that I lay emphasis on such pious persons turning to the higher principles as a *last means*; meaning, thereby, that they did not make earnest use of them, until urgent circumstances gave them somewhat of a deeper view of things. Thus, most certainly, as I have already said, the English Puritans applied themselves, almost wholly, to the pressing of converting truths. But, when some of them went to America, and found themselves, there, out of the reach of their oppressors, the spirit of the congregations began forthwith to decline. This soon became so apparent, as to shock the more pious ministers to the heart. Under such an impression, exactly, Mr. Thomas Sheppard preached his course of sermons on the "Ten Virgins;" which were soon after published, and afford a lively exemplification of the fact I am asserting.

In the preface to this book, there is a remarkable intimation, of the method pursued in it not being the prevalent one, amongst the Non-conformists. It is a friend of the author's who writes, after the author's

own death, (after describing the nature of the declension,) in these words: — “Man’s carnal heart, finds itself pinioned and straitened in the way (the good old way of effectual faith and obedience) that God has laid out; hence, it breaks out, on this side and on that; and will rather pluck up the ancient land-marks of God’s truth, than not make it broader. To be solicitous about sanctification and inherent grace, is too troublesome; to seek God diligently in the use of all means, &c., in constant watchfulness, &c., this must be laid aside, as a legal business. But, when all stones are turned, the way to heaven is, and will be found, a straight way. Truth has said it is so; and all the notions of man cannot make it otherwise.” He then says, — “He that is in earnest, &c., will be glad of any good help to guide him in this way,—this straight way to life; and, though there be many choice helps herein already extant, &c., for which this age has cause, on bended knees, to bless the Lord, and which will be such a testimony against the wantonness thereof, as it will never be able to answer; yet of those that do clearly, particularly, lively, and searchingly, discover and mark out this straight path, with the several practical turns thereof, and show where those who miss of the end at last, do turn out of it, although they go far therein; of those that pilot us, when we come into the narrow channel, unto the very point and entrance of life, and show us the rocks and shoals, on either hand, distinctly; — of these, I say, there is not too great a number. For to speak any good and useful truths, is good and commendable; but it is another and a further thing, to take the soul by the hand, and lead it, from step to step, through all the difficulties, deceits, and turnings, at which the closest hypocrites do miss their way, and lose themselves.”

Now, observe what the worthy man himself labours to impress upon his people : — “ There is,” says he, “ a double life of a Christian ; first, an outward life, which others see ; men see he comes to church, prays in the family, &c. : secondly, there is a secret, inward life, according to that of Matth. vi. 6., — ‘ Thy Father, which seeth in secret,’ — which none knows, but himself, and the Lord ; and this is, an infallible communion with God, vision of God, delight in God, &c., Psalm xlv. : — ‘ The king’s daughter is all glorious within.’ There is an open life of prayer, and hearing, and fasting ; and there is an inward secret life, in all these, wherein the Lord acquainted himself with his people, — Psalm lxiii. 1, 2, 3. : — ‘ To see thee as I have seen thee,’ &c. Now, there be diverse have this open life, yet wanting the secret life ; — as we love not to live among tombs, nor to have any communion with dead men, so the Lord is a stranger to them. He may secretly sweeten an ordinance to them, and move them, and shake, and trouble them, but himself is a stranger ; spiritual miseries not removed ; spiritual mercies not conveyed.”

It is in this spirit, that the book I quote from is written ; but, I conceive, nothing can be truer, than that they, amongst associated Christians, who have spoken thus, have never been, as the editor says, too great a number. Perhaps, rather, so clear an assertion of mature piety, as distinguished from that which is weak and unformed, might be looked for in vain, through scores of volumes. The truth, evidently, is, that these are not the natural sentiments of mere associated Christians, or teachers of justification. What is here comparatively depreciated, they are generally apt to lay much stress upon ; and, so long

as an association is in its early health and vigour, there seems good reason for doing so. What Sheppard calls the outward, or open, life, being then more or less animated with that contagious fervency, through which, so many have received their first religious impressions, and which, while it lasts, appears, both to those who feel it themselves, and those who are the means of exciting it in others, as the very best thing that they can attain to, on this side heaven. In this state of things, Sheppard's distinction would not be thought of; or, were it to be mentioned at all, it would, too probably, be resisted, as a superfluous, and, perhaps, dangerous, refinement. See, how even John Wesley felt, when he saw these first fruits of his labours: — "When," says he, "I saw them in their first love, magnifying the Lord, and rejoicing in God, their Saviour, I could expect nothing less, than that all these would have lived, like angels here below." And, probably, honest Sheppard had the same expectations, at least, in a measure, when he was leading in his persecuted (and then, no doubt, zealous,) flock into the wilderness. But when, at length, this ardour declines, as the circumstances, which excited it, pass away, even then it is too unlikely, that the evil should be detected, and the substantial defect pointed out, as Sheppard has done; because, it may be feared, that, as his Editor intimates, there are not many like-minded. In such cases, preachers themselves, too often, catch more or less of the general lukewarmness; and, being sick themselves, are unqualified to be efficient physicians to others. That, however, all who feel rightly, in such circumstances, will feel exactly as this good man did, can hardly be doubted. But, as I said, they have rarely spoken so directly to the point.



Compare the passage from him, with those quoted from Taylor and Worthington ; and see whether they do not wonderfully correspond. Almost the only difference is, that Sheppard speaks, from a pressing sense of the evil ; they speak, from a cordial apprehension of the good : he speaks, as men speak of health in a sickly season ; they speak of it, at their ease ; deeply valuing the blessing, but neither feeling nor dreading the want of it ; — indeed, being, by all means, determined to preserve it.


But, when Sheppard complains of the outward life prevailing so much, and the inward life so very little, does he not critically touch the weak part of the associated system, and do nothing more than describe its natural alloy ? Men do not associate, to pray in their closets, or to commune with their own hearts, — their object is, and must be, mutual excitement, which can be pursued, only in what he calls, the open life ; and, doubtless, as I have once and again observed, God has made his own blessed and glorious use of this ; but it cannot go beyond the effect, which the laws of nature allow to it. It has in it too much of animal nature, and depends too much on human passions, to be equable, or continuous. It has acted by paroxysms, which persecution, and low circumstances, have tended to prolong ; but, still, excitation must subside ; and they who have not acquired some principle within themselves, individually, independent of all such variable movements, must sink down also. They, who gain this principle, who use every thing outward in subservience to what is inward, have, I conceive, been hitherto a comparatively small number ; and, hence, I take it, the life of associated Christians, in general, has seldom, for any length of time, risen much above

Sheppard's open, or outward, life. "Oh, that it were not as clear as the light, and as discernible as the earth under our feet," says Richard Baxter, "that most true Christians are weaklings, and of the lower forms, in the school of Christ! Alas! how ignorant are most of the best? How little love, or faith, or zeal, or heavenly-mindedness, or delight in God, have they? How little tenderness of conscience, and care of obeying, have they? Is not this the common case of godly people? Oh, that we could truly deny it! Let their lives be witness; their neglects, worldliness, pride, dulness, and customariness in duty; strangeness to God, unwillingness to secret prayer, unacquaintedness with the Spirit's operations and joys; — let all these witness, whether the school of Christ have not most children in it, and how few of them ever go to the university of riper knowledge; and how few of those" (I presume he means even of ~~them~~ who do advance somewhat) "are fit to begin here the works of their priestly office, which they must live in for ever, in the high and joyful praises of God and the Lamb." You will observe, that Baxter wrote this statement (for the justness of which he goes on solemnly to appeal, to all true Christians who know themselves, or are close observers of others) when associated religion was at its apparent height (1652); when he himself had been labouring more than ten years, with unusual success; and when his own parish of Kidderminster, formed an association of as perfect a kind, as was then in England; — yet, what does this present to us, but that which Sheppard so much deplores, — only with a substance of sincerity, we may hope, generally, at bottom, — a mere place on the foundation, but no building! It is remarkable, that, in proportion as Baxter became

acquainted with individuals (whether puritanic or otherwise), who had not rested in the open life, but had cultivated that which is inward and secret, his views of Christian attainments became more cheerful. This seems to have been more and more the case with him, while he himself lived a retired life in London. The body of Puritanism was then rapidly decaying, perhaps by this very means ; upright individuals were both more impelled to seek their own establishment, and became more conspicuous, through their steadiness in the midst of a general decline. The last tract, in the second of Baxter's four volumes — written eight years after his removal from Kidderminster—is, perhaps, the truest and most useful view of confirmed piety, that ever came from a puritanic Non-conformist. Yet, to this day, and at this day, how little is this tract known among associated Christians ? But even this does not probe the wound to the bottom. It will aid and animate him, who is disposed to advance ; but it will hardly awaken the slothful. It describes the symptoms of the two states well ; but it does not sufficiently unfold the secret causes, of such general continuance in the one, and such rare attainment of the other.

In fact, what was there done in this way, by the whole associated class, before John Wesley ? How much he has done, I will not now stop to ask ; but, before him, who, that we know of, except excellent Doddridge,—I mean, amongst associated Christians,—ever thought of testifying, against the misinterpretation of the 7th chapter to the Romans ; that grand prop (not the chapter, but the false sense given to it) of low piety, from the days of Augustine, till now ? Animated and impressive writers there have been, and none more so than among English Non-con-

formists ; but, it is in what concerns conversion they excel. The substance of piety they well explain ; but, in no instance, that I know of, do they do full justice to its maturity. They write, in general, as to a weak and comfortless people ; and seldom dare to look beyond, a mediocrity of virtue and happiness. They, doubtless, recommend, urge, and highly value, private duties ; but, except Baxter, and a few like him, they do not give them their due eminence in the Christian life, nor dwell sufficiently on the happiness of having a secret converse of God, daily maintained, with which even fellow-Christians, the most nearly connected, in a sense do not intermeddle. Joseph Alleine, who had perfectly attained this himself, would fain have led others to it ;—so would Richard Alleine, less seraphic than his namesake, but scarcely less sincere ; so would Shaw ; so would Matthew Mead (in a measure), in his “ Almost Christian ;” and so would the dry, metaphysical, yet often sublime, John Howe. But, somehow or other, it was not their province : their sphere of teaching was a lower one. They rose, sometimes, to the very top of it, but could not go beyond it. Baxter, as I said, I always except ; but, as to all the rest (viewing them as teachers), either what they valued was so outward and open, as not to give the necessary supremacy (necessary in order to perfection) to what is inward and secret ; or they so adhered to the mediatory views, which belonged to their notion of justification, as not to become sufficiently possessed of those ultimate truths, which are essential to sanctification. They have, generally, had but partial views, of the divine analogy of God’s great plans ; they have had low ideas of human nature ; they have not understood, nor equally studied, the Scriptures. Therefore, though they have



done what cannot be too much valued, other workmen, who could do less in a way of main strength, but much more in a way of skill, have ever been requisite; and, through Divine wisdom and goodness, have never been wanting.

It is curious to observe, how near to some of these ideas of mine, Jonathan Edwards was brought, after his repeated disappointments in his congregation, at Northampton. His deep Calvinism, made him rather inquire into the distinguishing marks of real conversion, than how immature piety might be advanced and ripened. Still, he has said what is highly interesting and sagacious; and, I cannot but think, that his book on "Religious Affections" has appeared at its appointed time, to aid the invisible Church in its progress from those lower views, and separate agencies, to what will be more noble, because more united. "Many," says he in his Preface, "will probably be hurt in their spirits, to find so much, that appertains to religious affection, here condemned; and, it may be, some will be ready to charge me with inconsistency. It is a hard thing, to be a hearty, zealous, friend of what has been good and glorious in the late extraordinary appearances, and to rejoice much in it, and, at the same time, to see the evil and pernicious tendency of what has been bad, and earnestly to oppose that; but yet," adds he, "I am humbly, but fully, persuaded, we shall never be in the way of truth, nor go on in a way acceptable to God, and tending to the advancement of Christ's kingdom, till we do so."

"After religion," he observes, afterward, in the same Preface, "has revived in the Church of God, and enemies appear, people that are engaged to defend its cause are commonly most exposed; where

they are least sensible of danger. While they are wholly intent upon the opposition that appears openly before them, to make head against that,—and do neglect, carefully, to look all around them,—the Devil comes behind them, and gives a fatal stab, unseen; and has opportunity to give a more home-stroke, and wound the deeper, because he strikes at his leisure, and according to his pleasure, being obstructed by no guard or resistance.

“And so it is likely ever to be in the Church, whenever religion revives remarkably; till we have learned well to distinguish, between saving affections and experiences, and those manifold fair shows, and glistening appearances, by which they are counterfeited. By this means, the Devil deceives great multitudes, about the state of their souls; making them think they are something, when they are nothing. By this means, he many ways damps and wounds religion, in the hearts of the saints; obscures and deforms it by corrupt mixtures; causes their religious affections wofully to degenerate; and, sometimes, for a considerable time, to be like the manna which bred worms and stank; and dreadfully ensnares and confounds the minds of others of the saints, and entangles them in a wilderness, out of which they can by no means extricate themselves. By this means, Satan brings in even the friends of religion, insensibly to themselves, to do the work of enemies; by destroying religion, in a far more effectual manner than open enemies ever do, under the notion of advancing it.”

Now, add this view of a rapid decline, after a revival,—nay after two revivals, at least,—to what Mr. Shepard has said, to what Dr. Owen has said, and to what Mr. Wesley has said, of more gradual and insidious

declensions, as, also, to what Mr. Baxter has said of the ordinary state of associated Christians, and then say, whether they do not, altogether, give a view, against which, it is comfortable to have some solid set-off. In these last remarks, which I could not but transcribe at large, there is much accurate observation of fact, and strength of judgment. But, I differ from Edwards materially, in his unlimited rejection of all that is transient, and in his ascribing, so wholly, to the Devil, what human imbecility, and the imperfections of the principles at work, are fully adequate to account for. My humble opinion is, that, in the state of things, now, and heretofore, God has been pleased to make great use of the stronger natural passions; some of which, are just as much fitted to catch the flame of contagious piety, (of which, associated bodies are the receptacles and conductors,) as wood, placed in the front of a well-built mass of fuel, in a grate, is fitted to be lighted by a candle. But, how often do we see the wood thus lighted, when the fuel, behind, does not become kindled? And, how often, even when kindled, does it give marks of only a dying kind of life; showing that it is not actually dead, by its smoke, rather than by its brightness? In fact, how few, comparatively, in any, or all the social systems, have attained to a clear, steady, equable glow?

Baxter, speaking of Joseph Alleine, has these remarkable words:—"It is his highest excellency, in my eyes, that he attained to a right temperament of the Christian religion, suitable to the glorious hopes of faith, and to the wonderful love of the Redeemer. And, when most Christians think they have done much, if they can weep and groan over their corruptions, and can abstain from the lustful pollutions of the world, in the midst of many doubts and fears,—

love and joy, and a heavenly mind, were the internal part of his religion ; and the large and fervent praises of God, and thanksgiving for his mercy, especially for Christ, and the Spirit, and heaven, were the external exercises of it. He was no despiser of a broken heart ; but he had attained the blessing of a healed, joyful heart. And Oh ! how amiable it is, to hear the tongue employed, seriously and frequently, in that which it was made for ; and to see a man passing, with joyful hopes, toward immortality ! O ! did Christians, yea, ministers, but live, with the joy, and gratitude, and praise, of Jehovah, which beseemeth those that believe what *they* believe, and those that are entering into the celestial choir,—they would, then, be an honour to God and their Redeemer ; and would win the world to a love of faith and holiness ; and make them throw away their worldly fool-games, and come and see what it is, these joyous souls have found. But, when we show the world no religion but sighing and complaining, and live a sadder life than they ; and yet talk of the glad tidings of Christ, and pardon, and salvation ; we may talk so long enough, before they will believe us, that seem no more to be believers ourselves ; or, before they will leave their fleshly pleasure, for so sad and dreadful a life as this.”

You see how this passage, while it holds out a brilliant example of a more excellent way, substantially recognises what (in the former quoted passage) he had written twenty years before ; the last expressions, here, exactly corresponding to that low and painful statement.

Put, then, I say, all these facts and acknowledgments together : those, I mean, of John Wesley, of John Owen, of Sheppard, and his editor, of Edwards, and of Baxter ; weigh the amount of their respective



and joint evidence, as to what has been produced, and, of consequence, can yet reasonably be looked for, from Christianity, in the associated form,— and then pronounce, whether the other facts, which I have also adduced, and in the substance of which, you see, I have Mr. Wesley to support me, and Mr. Milner to assist me in tracing, — whether these facts, I say, are not most consolatory, and most encouraging? What a melancholy retrospect would the whole past ages of the Church afford, to the impartial, philosophic thinker, if what those good men lament over, were the entire harvest that had been reaped? And, how limited would be our comfort, though a few uncommonly bright individuals appeared, here and there, amongst the clusters,— a Baxter, an Alleine, a Howe, a Doddridge, a Fletcher, &c. ? These would be exceptions, rather, to a general rule, than specimens, and samples, of any actual species : giants, as it were, in the moral world, to be viewed as curiosities ; but no kind of pledge, for a general increase of stature. Is it not, then, I ask, most truly satisfactory, that, in addition to such excellent individuals, there should be an actual species, of substantially similar excellence? Not, as I said before, a large species ; but, still, a species, because the excellence is uniform. I will not say, that all the individuals are exactly on a level, with the extraordinary luminaries I have just named ; that is, that they are all Alleines, Doddridges, or Fletchers : but, I desire you, candidly, to examine the few specimens from our National Church, which I gave above ; and see, whether there is not an identical spirit of unfettered, cheerful, luminous religion, running, like one and the same clear rivulet, through them all ; a spirit, attractive to every right and pleasant feeling of human nature, and in sweet harmony

with all its faculties ; a spirit, intelligible in its nature, grounds, results ; doing true honour to its source, — Christianity, — because it confers true glory on its happy subject, — man ; bringing him into the true sunshine of the moral universe ; and making good, most unequivocally, all the statements of Scripture, respecting that life and immortality, which is brought to light by the Gospel ?

Could I bring together many more instances, from different times, I should elucidate my subject still more : some variety of classes would be found ; but a delightful agreement would be no less apparent. The Roman Catholic saints, for instance, would be, in some respects, different from our Church-of-England worthies ; but, in no such degree, as to cast doubt on my idea, of their being of the same identical species : for, of this species, the criterion is, power, as opposed to weakness ; and religion, become “ a fixed habit, like a nature.” This, they all contend for, and exemplify. They may complain of an impressible, and depressible, animal frame ; they may feel temptations within, as well as without ; every natural sensibility requiring to be guarded : but their blessed peculiar is, that they no longer have to complain, of their heart wandering from God ; — for the deliberate, sober, uniform sentiment, and supreme bias, of their heart is, — “ Here will I dwell ; for I have a delight therein.”

Here, then, as I have said, Roman Catholic, and Church-of-England luminaries, substantially agree ; but, I conceive, they have each distinct excellencies, which make them distinctly valuable. Depth and decidedness belong, I think, especially, to the Roman Catholic ; luminousness, cheerfulness, and sublime rationality, are found, no less eminently, in the Church

of England. Yet, I do not mean to say, that each has not a real share of both sets of properties ; and, still less, would I insinuate, that the Romish and Anglican Churches are the only establishments, in which such luminaries present themselves. All my enquiries, certainly, tend to persuade me, that, in these two portions of the visible Church, such instances may, most easily, be found ; but, I am assured, the Lutheran Church has not, by any means, been destitute of them ; and there are “ a few names ” in the Presbyterian establishments : for instance, Boerhaave, as described by himself, in a memoir quoted by Dr. Johnson.

Mr. Wesley acknowledges the peculiar piety of Roman Catholic saints, in a remarkable way, in his preface to Mr. Fletcher’s Life. He says, he had long despaired of finding so holy a person, as the Marquis De Renty. Mr. Fletcher, alone, had, in his view, appeared to equal him. I agree with Mr. Wesley, in the difficulty of finding his equal among Mr. Wesley’s, or our Protestant, contemporaries. But, what was really excellent in him, has very many parallels in his own Church ; and, I trust, several others, in our Church, in the whole of its course, beside the excellent Mr. Fletcher. But, I make this reference to Mr. Wesley’s preface, chiefly for the purpose of showing, what a wide-spread light these single luminaries have been capable of diffusing, amid the night of general depravity ; and how much it may have been to the advantage of spiritual mariners, who were anxious to direct their own course in the best possible manner, to have them to steer by. A Puritan biographer of Joseph Alleine tells us, that, “ he was much taken with Monsieur De Renty ; whose life he read often, and imitated some of his severities, upon

better grounds ;" (Who art thou, that thus judgest thy brother ?) " especially his self-annihilation, striving, continually, to be nothing, that God might be all." See, here, how the individual of the associated class, who pants for excellence above the level of his own species, is furnished with the aid he needs, from the distinct class. Is not this fact, in the instance of the most holy man we know, perhaps, in the whole associated series, a striking illustration of the substance of my view ?

But, as I have just hinted, I cannot think De Renty so unrivalled a saint, as my old friend would make him. I do believe, he could not have been more holy, in intention and purpose, while an inhabitant of this world. But, we find the same holiness, I conceive, with less mixture of weakness, in others of that communion : in Fénelon, as I already intimated, and, most peculiarly, in Francis de Sales. This last, I conceive, not to have been overrated, by one, who said, that he gave the nearest idea, which could be imagined in a mortal, of what our blessed Saviour had been in this world. What could go higher ? But, not to dwell on such comparisons, I do say, — for the Roman Catholic saints, altogether, we have infinite reason to thank God. For leading into the very depths of inward piety, inward subduedness, and inward, and, of course, outward, self-government, and true self-denial, they are, under the Divine teacher of all, and his inspired followers, the great masters.

Of the distinct luminaries of our own National Church, I have, already, said enough, to show my value for them ; but, I soberly believe, not more than, of right, belongs to them. They would not, however, as I said above, form an adequate species, of them-

selves. As Christianity at large, has its foundations (distinct from its superstructure,) to the laying of which, none of the sanctification teachers have, hitherto, been competent, (and, hence, the indispensable necessity for a distinct class of foundation workmen),—so sanctification, itself, has its comparative basement and elevation; its strong, and its ornamental, parts; and, therefore, may, in like manner, have needed some answerable variety of hands. In this view, it appears suitable, not only that there should be two such classes, as, I conceive, the Romish and Anglican Establishments, respectively, to afford,—but, that they should, also, have come forward, in order of time, as they have done; the workers of what is deep, and strong, first; those of what is more elevated, and ornamental, afterward. If you wish to see this distinction fully illustrated, read a few pages of Mr. Wesley's extract from the Life of De Renty, and, afterward, a passage or two in John Smith; and then, ask yourself, whether, to the subdued and mortified spirit of De Renty, you would not like to add the luminous mind, and cheerful temper, of the Cambridge Philosopher.

A statue, must be formed first, and polished afterward. Thus, the substance and solidity of sanctification, seem to be exclusively aimed at, by the Romish spiritualists; and, to this, their monastic severity of life, was, probably, best adapted. The Anglican teachers seem peculiarly fitted, to bring the excellence, when formed, out of monastic inclosures, into noon-day intercourse; and to give it a drapery fitter, than the Monkish cowl, for that extended diffusion, to which, in spite of hindrances, it is finally destined. This may appear very fanciful; but I feel what I am saying to be more congruous with actual

fact, than I can explain in any present remarks. I trust I am under obligation, daily, to both ; and I hope I shall be enabled ever to aim, at the depth of the one, no less than the rationality and liberality of the other.

The temper, which this combination would form, has been described, with uncommon justness, by Dr. Johnson. Perhaps, a better passage never came from him :—"He is happy, that carries about with him, in the world, the temper of the cloister, and preserves the fear of doing ill, while he suffers himself to be impelled, by the zeal of doing good ; who uses the comforts, and the conveniences, of his condition, as though he used them not ; with that constant desire of a better state, which sinks the value of earthly things ; who can be rich, or poor, without pride in riches, or discontent in poverty ; who can pass, undefiled, through a polluted world, and, among all the vicissitudes of good and evil, have his heart fixed only where true joys are to be found."

I need add no more, to elucidate the outline which I wished to give you. The facts I have brought together, I conceive, fully evince the substance of what I was anxious to establish ; namely, that there is a view of the Church of Christ, far more extensive than the generality of pious persons have an idea of ; and, that that view affords both encouragement and instruction, which cannot easily occur to those, who contemplate things on a narrower scale. To you, I need hardly observe, that the encouragement consists chiefly in this : that, in the obvious variety of God's wise and gracious methods, the deficiencies of each method, are supplied by another method ; and that, on a still closer view, it may justly be hoped, that there is a tendency toward a union of the ex-

cellencies of both ; in which matured state of the great system, imperfections will be surmounted, and benefits accomplished, beyond what can now enter into our hearts to conceive.

The instruction, as it seems to me, is, that each individual, who comes to the knowledge of these things, is called upon to do what in him lies, to advance that most desirable union of methods, both in his own heart, and in the world : chiefly in the former ; but, also, as far as he can, in the latter : “ Looking for,” says St. Peter, “ and *hastening on* (as John Wesley renders it) the coming of the day of God.” What I mean is, that the associated Christian, when once become acquainted with the deeper and more elevated piety, which has been the customary attainment of the distinct and individual Christian, should, as much as possible, become a “ follower of those, who, through faith and patience,” have, thus signally, “ inherited the promise.” Not, certainly, (as I have already observed,) by forsaking what Providence appears to call him to, in the associated method, but, by superadding all the aptest means of the distinct and individual class ; reading their writings ; studying their characters ; setting them before us, as models of temper and disposition ; and making the attainment of their spirit, the great object, both of our endeavours, and our prayers. They are a class, so peculiarly entitled to say, with St. Paul, “ Be ye followers of us, even as we, also, are of Christ Jesus,” as to make this apostolic injunction equivalent, to the strongest possible exhortation, on this very subject.

Yet, I think, I have said enough, to show, that, in my view, this higher species, in order to its perfection, needs the spirit of the lower, not less really, than the lower needs to unite itself to the higher. I need

not repeat what I have said on this point ; though, most truly, I could not say more than I feel. You may, here, however, recur to what I have said on the subject of John Smith ; and respecting my much-valued Church-of-England men, to which I will now only add, that, in my opinion, the teachers of sanctification, hitherto, have, through their ignorance of foundation work, been rather collectors of “gold, and silver, and costly stones,” for the future use of the Church, than efficient builders themselves. They were, themselves, edified ; and they have nobly assisted all honest, and zealous, self-edifiers, who had skill to draw from their stores. But, they have been, in a great degree, like the prophets of old, as St. Peter represents them, “who ministered not unto themselves, but unto us.” That is, whose chief effect was to be future, when Providence should bring on the “fulness of time.” In a word, if, hitherto, the teachers of first principles have been able to do little, that was permanent in society ; the teachers of sanctification have been as unable to do, what was deeply, or diffusively, influential upon society ; and that, therefore, skilfulness in first principles is indispensable, to make perfection itself perfect.

When this effect has been once accomplished, I humbly conjecture, the distinct expedients, by which first principles have hitherto been supported against their own weakness, will very much, if not wholly, pass away. Here, however, as I say, I but conjecture : time will show how far I am right. But, it is natural to suppose, that, whatever an imperfect state of things renders necessary, will, in a more perfect state of things, be superseded. Thus, I



should think, that what is now resorted to, for the sake of excitement and stimulation, will cease to be necessary, nay, might rather prove an incumbrance, when the habit of spiritual health has become firm and equable, not only in this and that individual, but in the great body of sincere Christians. In fact, it strikes me, that, in proportion as the teachers of first principles, rise into the more exalted views of the teachers of sanctification, — what Sheppard calls, the open, or outward, life, will be less cultivated, because the inward and secret life will be so much more valued and enjoyed. Religion, I conceive, will, then, discover itself, less by its exercises, and more by its unequivocal fruits. Not that there will be less prayer, less study of the Scriptures, less attention even to Public Worship. Far from it: the two former, I only think, will, then, be so pleasantly performed, by each man, for himself, that something like a jealousy of impairing the delight, by any animal intermixture, may begin to grow up; and that it may be, in some degree, felt, that, in such acts, the less there is of what is human, the more there is of what is divine. I speak thus, in no mystical sense; but, simply I mean this: when we know any one, as a common acquaintance, or, when our interview is for the gratification of curiosity, or some such common end, we are perfectly satisfied to meet that person in a company, though the more select that company be, the pleasanter. But, when friendship is formed, — when the strongest inward, and secret affection, is felt by us, — then, we instinctively long to have our friend, by himself alone, that we may say to him, what is in the bottom of our heart; what none but himself can fully understand; and what would lose its pure raciness, if any other, but he to whom it is spoken, were a listener. Some-

thing like this, I conceive likely to take place, where such a feeling would not be inconsistent with some providential duty. It is natural, I should think. But nature can be restrained, or counteracted, when its common movements would clash with Divine plans. So long, therefore, as a pious man's opening his heart, in acts of prayer, before others, shall be necessary for the good of others, probably such a disrelish, as I speak of, may not be permitted to form itself.

I observed above, (when remarking on the passage from Sheppard,) that associated Christians seemed, chiefly, to tend to the open, or outward life ; as that in which their sphere of action, as associated, naturally lay. I wish, here, to mention one remarkable symptom of this prevalent bias ; which is, that, when such Christians have most particularly noted, seasons of spiritual consolation, or refreshment, they, mostly, describe them, as occurring in social acts, or public ordinances ; and, in these, of course, they eminently look for them. For illustration of this fact, I may refer to the leading turn of Dr. Watts's Hymns and Psalms. I almost think, he was providentially appointed, to furnish the revived movement of associated piety, which Divine wisdom foresaw would take place in England, in the eighteenth century, with an unexampled stock of materials for that department (which alone needed to be so provided for) of their joint worship. But, examine his poetry, and, I think, you will see, that, though converse with God, in solitude, is not absolutely overlooked, the sheet-anchor is, what he calls, the sanctuary. In particular, in his Psalms, you find him, generally, applying to Christian assemblies, what David said of the temple service ; — as if public ordinances, occupied the same supreme place in the inward and spiritual, as in the

outward and carnal, dispensation ; and, as if those Jewish rites had not a far more profound and nobler reference, to things strictly invisible. Now, this, I own, appears to me a semi-Judaism, rather than the pure and unmixed Christian spirit ; but, a semi-Judaism, necessary for the existing circumstances. This, therefore, I do conceive, will give place, in proportion as piety ripens in the Church ; and, that a time will come, when it will be fully felt, that, though social means (strictly so called) have had their great use, and, though public celebrations can never cease to be interesting and valuable, yet, still, the nearest and blesseddest approach to God, on this earth, is in the deep privacy of devotion ; that the outward parts of the sanctuary, might, indeed, receive the worshippers of God in bands, or companies ; but that, of the Holy of Holies, it was the indispensable peculiarity, to be entered alone.

This leads me to advert, briefly, to another feature ; which seems to have distinguished associated Christians. They have, I conceive, had a very general disposition, to fix their views on the mediatory part of the Christian dispensation, to the comparative neglect of that which is ultimate. They are fond to think of God manifest in the flesh ; but seldom, I believe, equally fond to think of him, as a Spirit, who must be worshipped in spirit and in truth. They seem to prefer dwelling on the human nature of Christ, rather than on his divine. They, in a sense given to the words by John Wesley, “ know Christ after the flesh ;” and, therefore, they generally use the name Jesus, without any honourable addition, (a thing rarely done by the apostolic writers, in their Epistles,) rather than those appellations, which designate him as the Lord of heaven and earth. In fact, their system

is somewhat of a sensitive one ; which is strictly congruous, with its being so much a social system, agreeably to what I have already observed. I do not, however, speak of this, as matter of blame. I dare say, it was, on the whole, most suitable to the views of Providence ; but, I humbly think, it will not always be so. My opinion is, that, as things ripen, God will be, more and more, spiritually worshipped ; and Christ will be, more and more, recognised, as the King of kings, and the Lord of lords, — the Alpha, and the Omega.

Now, in these several instances, how remarkably have the distinct Christians, — the teachers of sanctification, anticipated, what I have been looking forward to as probable. As a species, they have always cultivated the inward and secret life ; adopting no part of the outward and open life, but public and domestic worship only. The public worship of God, they have not undervalued ; but, their chief delight has been, to follow our Lord's advice : — “ Enter into thy closet, and shut thy door ; ” and their attention to ultimate truths has been so supreme, as even, sometimes, to suggest an apprehension, lest mediatory objects might not be too much forgotten. Their taste, too, respecting public worship itself, deserves to be noticed. Amongst associated Christians, this has been very generally conducted, on the same exciting principles as the rest of their system. Devotion has been stimulated, by freshly-conceived prayers ; and an impassioned mode of address from the pulpit, has had the obvious preference. Not so the distinct Christians. They have seemed to think, that an appetite for spiritual nourishment should be brought with them, rather than whetted on the spot. They have, therefore, uniformly preferred well-conceived, to newly-

conceived prayers ; and, provided genuine unction was not wanting, the deeper and better digested the discourses addressed to them have been, they have liked them the more. They have, in fact, systematically distinguished, between emotions and affections, the passions and the heart ; and they have, accordingly, aimed at feelings which were lasting, rather than those which were most likely to be evanescent and momentary.

I am far, however, from pretending to ascertain, what will exactly take place. It merely strikes me, as reasonable, on the whole, that what belongs to weakness, will drop off and vanish, and that what belongs to strength, will be confirmed and improved. Every thing useful will, doubtless, be retained, as long as it is useful ; but, it is also to be supposed, that, as all things, here, are in an evident progress toward a completion of the great scheme, — in proportion as that which is perfect shall come, that which is in part shall be done away. I am aware, the letter of this text belongs to the future life ; but, if there be a certain comparative perfection of the Christian dispensation, to be arrived at in this world, the principle of the text will equally hold good respecting it.

I acknowledge, my prejudices may incline me to overvalue the methods, which I myself have been (without any kind of predetermination) led to adopt. Therefore, I do not wish to attach to my observations an atom more of weight, than, of right, may belong to them. In intention, I am an humble seeker of truth ; and wish, like Simeon and Anna, in another eventful period, to wait for the kingdom of God, in whatever form it may please him it should appear. But, from all I have read, and thought, and observed, I must own myself to have come to these persuasions, that,

provided always the pure, spiritual, self-denying, heavenly temper of the Gospel, can be caught, possessed, and uniformly acted on, the more simple, noiseless, equable, unostentatious, and unlaborious the means are, the better. The Divine principle, itself, will be the more apparent, the more acceptable, the more engaging, when it is seen in those blessed and happy results, which all men, in their senses, must allow to be invaluable, rather than in those performances, whose outside, at least, has always appeared, and, I suppose, must always appear, discouraging and forbidding. A tree may bear ever so delicious and salutary fruit; but, so long as it is thought that it can grow only in a hot-house, its culture will be proportionately rare; but, let it be once demonstrated, that it will thrive, without all that labour, — that all it needs is, good soil, good air, rain, and sunshine, — and every man, that has a spot to put it in, will desire to possess it.

I am well assured, however, this could, as yet, have been the case in, comparatively, few instances; and, did I not hope it might be done in a more truly evangelical way, — I mean, with a nearer resemblance to the spirit of our Lord himself, than has, as yet, appeared in any considerable number, even of those I have been, comparatively, commending; that is, with more thorough spirituality, than that of distinct Protestant Christians hitherto, and with more consistent, and manly, rationality, than that of any Romish saints, — I would not suffer myself to dwell upon the prospect. But, I do trust, that, by means of a happy union of first principles, as they have been insisted on by so many faithful witnesses of the associated species, with the sublimer views of the individual species, — as you know them, and as I

have, in these sheets, given instances of them,—an increasing, and multiplying race of Christians will, at length, be formed, who will so converse with God in their closets, so retain the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, in their hearts, so aspire to, and so breathe, the spirit of their glorious head and pattern; be so dead with him to the world, and have their true and real life so hid with him in God,—as, in their degree, to be really as he was in the world; that is, to be all spirit, all ease, all cheerfulness, all benignity; in his own exalted sense, “to come,” like him, “eating and drinking;” that is, evidently, unclogged by peculiarities, unfettered, by observances,—showing nothing but piety itself, in its strength, its loveliness, its divine simplicity, its unmixed excellence.

Granting, that such persons do not pray with one another, they will, nevertheless, “speak often one to another,” as the prophetic expression is; and, if “their speech be always with grace, seasoned” as “with salt,” its edifying influence may be in no degree lessened, by its freedom from all forms. If each “prays without ceasing,” the spirit of prayer will flow forth, in the whole of their mutual intercourse; and, as it is said, that all the prismatic colours, blended together, make white, so I see nothing to prevent, that all those devotional feelings, which others give vent to, or excite, by distinct methods, should be essentially mixed together, in the common conversation of such holy and happy persons. Besides, in this way, pious sentiment may, most widely, and with least difficulty, transfuse itself. *They* may be thus led to pray for themselves, who would be thoroughly revolted, by a proposal of another praying with them. I cannot but

think, that something in human nature, very different from depravity, might revolt from this latter suggestion; but wise and well-managed conversation, has depravity, alone, to stand in its way. My own experience has largely explained this fact to me. Our Lord's most solemn discourses, were seldom other than unfettered conversations; all questions which were pertinent, or remarks which were candid, being uniformly well taken, and evidently invited. He, doubtless, chose this method of doing good, on the self-same grounds that must always recommend it, when the sphere of action is, like his, society at large. "He knew what was in man;" and he used his wisdom accordingly. When the Apostles had associated Christians to manage, they pursued another plan; and they who have a like duty to discharge, must proportionately do as they did: but they, who are called to the same open, promiscuous converse, as our blessed Saviour condescended to hold with his countrymen, can, I conceive, do no wiser or better thing, than to make his special conduct, as far as possible, their model. Can I help observing, here, that, as our blessed Lord does not appear to have practised joint prayer, as a means of doing even his disciples good, (a fact, I presume, clearly implied in their request, "Teach us to pray," and in his giving them a compendious formulary by way of answering that wish,) so he seems, for himself, to have had, substantially, that paramount liking for prayer strictly private, which has, in all times, distinguished Christians of the individual class? This is shown on many occasions; but most, on that last great occasion, when, taking with him Peter, James, and John, to a remote part of the garden, he removed still farther from these,



“ as it were, about a stone’s cast,” before he betook himself to actual devotion. Such a movement, on such an occasion, is, I presume, as strong an expression of a prevalent habit, as could well have been given. But, do not suppose, that I could wish to strain it one hair-breadth, beyond its due bearing. Thinking persons may reason from such a circumstance, as to “ a more excellent way.” But nothing done, or omitted, by our Lord, can ever imply censure, on what was done by the apostles.

I wish to make one more observation, about our influence on those we converse with. That an effect of this kind is, one day, to be produced, as extensive as it will be deep, no Christian can dispute: the kingdoms of this world must, at length, become the kingdoms of our Lord. But this effect can hardly be accomplished, by any thing we have yet seen in associated Christians: for, whether we view them in their first warmth, or in their subsequent temperament, they discover a peculiar unfitness for such an enlarged sphere. I, of course, speak not of individuals—I am sure I am not authorized—but I speak of the species in general. In their earlier stage, I conceive, they cannot widely, or effectually, influence the world; because their essential principle, as a body, is, separation from the world. They appear designed, by Divine wisdom, for the re-invigoration, much more than the diffusion, of the religious principle. They are, therefore, insulated (like the family of the Jewish patriarch), in order to exclude, even that common contact with the world, which might impede the providential purpose: or, rather, they are like a phalanx of warriors, encamped in the midst of their enemies. In this state of things, there can be no

peace, no truce, no intermixture. If individuals straggle from within their own precincts, they, too generally, fall victims to their rashness. Their safety, therefore, has been almost uniformly (as I observed above) made sure, by persecution; and, if Mr. Wesley be right, whenever this has abated, the zeal that had animated the body abates along with it. Here, therefore, there is a moral impossibility of the world being influenced, — mutual hostility being the indispensable pledge of security.

But, when the hostility abates; when the wiser and more established individuals gain a comparative brightness, from the more general flame having subsided; will it be found, that these individuals can do much more than “deliver their own souls?” “Their manners,” says Mrs. Barbauld, in her most ingenious view of the progress of an associated body, “have become less austere, without having, as yet, lost any thing of their original purity.” Yet, whom do they, or whom could they, be expected to influence? Probably, not their own children; for what is the real amount of their manners? If I am to judge from the instances I can just now recur to, an odd, and awkward alternation, of the more blameless sort of gaiety of the world, and their own original seriousness and gravity. This may, at first view, appear a rash allegation; yet, when I read such an account as the following, what other idea can I form? “Mr. Poole,” says Dr. Calamy, “used to continue his studies, till the afternoon was far advanced; at which time, he laid study aside, went abroad, and spent the evening at the house of some friend; and at no one place more frequently, than at Alderman Ashhurst’s. At such times, he would be exceedingly, but innocently, merry; very much diverting, both

himself, and his company. After supper, when it grew toward time to go home, he would say, ‘ Now let us call a reckoning;’ and, then, would begin some very grave and serious discourse, and, when he found his company was composed and serious, he would bid them good night, and go home. This course,” adds Dr. Calamy, “ was doubtless very serviceable to his health; and tended to enable him to go through the great fatigue of his studies; and it seems a noble example, of mixing the *utile*, with the *dulce*. Were the mirth of our conversation always so closed, it would leave no uneasy reflections behind.”—Calamy’s Continuation, p. 15, 16. Palmer, vol. i. p. 168.

I dare say, there were many exceptions, to what is here described. For example, I should suppose both the Henrys, Philip and Matthew, had a happier faculty, than good Mr. Poole appears to have had, of uniting cheerfulness with piety; yet, you see how warmly Mr. Poole’s practice is applauded by his historian; with an additional remark, also, which implies, that, in his day, there was the same mirth, but not the same appendix to it. Could it have been expected? What impression could possibly be made on the rising generation, by hours of gaiety, formally concluded with a few minutes of gravity; by the stated exclusion of religion, while they were cheerful; and the fitting themselves for a short re-admission of it, when the mirth was over, by a sudden rigidity of behaviour! I question not the intention; but, I ask, what could be the result, but what it doubtless was, according to Dr. Calamy’s intimation, and our own knowledge?

I have no pleasure in going into these particulars: but I cannot, otherwise, do full justice to my subject. I need not remind you, how often the term *facetious*,

is applied to the later non-conforming ministers ; nor, I presume, can it be unfair to suppose, that what we read above, gives its least questionable meaning. But what could the honest men do ? Times of ease and liberty having come, they could not but enjoy them : but with such enjoyment, a piety essentially grave and solemn could not unite. It could, therefore, be introduced occasionally only ; and, as its appearance was the sign for every thing lively and pleasant to withdraw, young minds, who were subjected to this ever-recurring coercion on their most natural feelings, would be too likely, not only to neglect, what was thus so disadvantageously exhibited, but even to hate it more, than if they had been bred up in the most savage ignorance.

How strange is it, then, that Dr. Calamy should have thought this practice deserving of such an encomium ! But what is more extraordinary, the excellent Doddridge describes a conduct very similar to this, without seeming to be aware of its inevitable consequences. Speaking of Captain Munroe, of Fowles, in his Appendix to Gardiner's Life, he says, " that, though the natural cheerfulness of his temper inclined him, on other days, to facetious terms, in conversation ; yet, on the Sabbath, he was not only grave and devout, but carefully attentive that all his speech might tend to edification, and, as far as possible, minister grace to the hearers." I am wrong : it is not Doddridge, but a Scotch correspondent, who says this. The fact, however, we may suppose, just stated as it was ; and, I should imagine, it furnishes a specimen, of what was, in those times, very general, amongst religious people of the description alluded to.

It strikes me, that, let a person's theological views be what they may, something of this gloom must

always hang, about the lower species of piety, except where the mind is supported by a natural flow of spirits. I conceive, too, it would be most likely to show itself, when it is most unfortunate it should appear ; that is, at the very time of contact with the world ; because, it is in this precise situation, that the good person, of the weaker class, will be most painfully conscious of his deficiency of strength. This, in exact proportion to his sincerity, will induce, on such occasions, a more than usual reserve ; so that, he will, instinctively, look severe, just when it were to be wished he could look pleasant.

I certainly think the Wesleyan Methodists, as little chargeable with cheerless piety, or revolting gravity of look, as any associated Christians that have been in the Church. In fact, I think, where natural sense is strong, and piety deep, they are pleasant specimens of the reverse. Yet, let any pious Methodist read Mr. Wesley's sermon on " Friendship with the World ;" and then be easy, if he can, even in the most occasional intercourse with the world. I most soberly think, that the spirit of that discourse, and the following one, on " Separation from the World," concerns all Christians, individual or associated. But, I ask, if the letter of them is to be universally adhered to, how is enlarged and diffusive good to be done ? How is the leaven, or the salt, to be mingled with the mass of society ? Yet, can I doubt the strict necessity of these rules, for those to whom they are addressed ? Seldom, I believe, have associated Christians ever departed from them, without verifying, in some degree, the warnings, with which the former sermon closes. " Look round," says John Wesley, " and see the melancholy effects among your brethren ; how many of the mighty are fallen !

They would take no warning ; they would converse, and that intimately, with earthly-minded men, till they measured back their steps to earth again." A shrewd female writer, Miss Seward, has said, that " essential Methodists, invent monasteries for the mind." She meant it as an opprobrium ; but, it is true of all associated bodies of Christians ; and, uniformly, their departure from their providential monasticism, has been the signal for the glory departing from them.

See, then, the obvious necessity of that other class of Christians, of whom I have been speaking ; not members of a phalanx, — not mere parts of a body, whose vitalisation is that of the whole, and is therefore weakened and made inefficient, by any thing which suspends their joint action : but, Christians who stand, each, on the ground of his own principles ; who live, each, by his own distinct vitality ; and who possess, each, as it were, an independent phalanx in his own bosom. I mean no eulogy, in these expressions. I mean merely to describe, what I conceive the natural consequence, of being distinctly, and individually, trained to piety. What the associated Christian seeks, in the devotional circle, the individual Christian must look for, and, if he would stand at all, must find, in the recesses of his own heart. He fights his battles alone ; his circumstances do not admit of any kind of flight ; his shelter, as well as support, is wholly invisible. The result is, that he can keep his footing, only by habitual, at least, prevalent conquest ; and, when, through the grace of God, and a competent course of self-trial, he is confirmed in his path, he must possess a species of confidence, which, he who has had more extrinsic aid, is not likely to attain. The man I speak of, has separated himself

from the pollutions of the world, without withdrawing from its common intercourse. This, however, requires much discriminative wisdom ; and unremitting watchfulness, as well as tenderness of conscience : but, when the habit is gained, it is invaluable. He will not go into worldly company for pleasure, because his taste is of quite another kind : but, he will not shrink from calls of duty, or propriety ; because, he scarcely fears the world, more than he loves it. He fears it enough, to make him ever watchful against its seductions ; and, ever solicitous to take to him “the whole armour of God.” But, with this safeguard, he has no dread of any of its scenes ; except, where he should be, in any respect, a partaker, in the unfruitful works of darkness.

When, therefore, such a person, does mingle with the people of the world, he knows why he does so. It is no stealthy advance, beyond the limit of his conscience ; no widening of the circle, which he once prescribed to himself. It is, as concurring circumstances have fully shown him, an actual part of his duty. “In the calling,” merely, “wherein he was called, therein he abides with God.” Acting in this simplicity, he finds frequent opportunities for useful conversation ; of which he avails himself, with the wisest management he can use. Being accustomed to view religion itself, as in the most harmonious agreement with nature, providence, and all the higher tastes of man, he can graft wise and pious observations, on subjects, which would leave no opening whatever, to the theological dogmatist ; and, not having caught religion by the means of any party, he speaks of it, solely, in the language of plain sense, without danger, of exciting, either risibility, or disgust, by any uncouthness of phraseology. But, if

he should find it expedient, even to be wholly silent on religious subjects, (in which case, he will make his stay as short, as decorum, or duty, will allow,) he will still have comfort in reflecting, that he has shown, by his behaviour, that, what the world deems over-strictness, does not, necessarily, contract the brow; or damp the spirits; or cramp the intellect; or blunt the mental taste; or make a man less capable of holding his place amongst mankind, (as far as he himself judges it proper,) with ease, with respectability, with courtesy, and, yet, with an independence of mind, which no mere man of the world ever did, or could, exemplify.

Do I overcharge this pleasant picture? If you suspect this, go back to some of the specimens I have given you; to Taylor, to Worthington, to Smith. Mark their spirit, and manner; and, then, say, whether they must not have exhibited, substantially, in the companies where they appeared, such a character as I have just drawn. I am assured, that such, too, would have been eminently, and brightly displayed, by Fénelon, and Francis De Sales; as, also, by the well-known worthies of our church, — Herbert, Hammond, Cudworth, Mede; as well as by Scougal, and Lucas. Of Scougal, Doddridge says, that, “He was one of the first rank, though he wrote but little;” that “every page abounds with noble, and proper thoughts, clothed with a decent eloquence, suited to the subject;” that, his “Life of God in the Soul of Man,” and Sermons, should be often read; and, that “his early death, at the age of twenty-eight, was an unspeakable loss to the world.” Of Lucas, he tells us, that “his thoughts are excellent, — many of them taken from an attentive observation of human life;” and that he wrote,



as being entirely devoted to God, and superior to the world." Doddridge seems not to have known Smith, or Worthington; nor the two invaluable Sermons of Cudworth; as, on the same principle, he must have given, to each of them, a high encomium.

Of almost all of them, (and, especially, of the second volume of Lucas's "Inquiry after Happiness,") I must say, that, in my judgment, he who would speak about religion to the world with effect, must become their cordial (I will by no means say, exclusive) pupil. He must acquire their easy, cheerful, luminous, happy, manner; and he can do so, only by combining, with their enlarged mental views, that spirit, which the congenial Doddridge has so well described in Lucas; the being "entirely devoted to God, and superior to the world." This, you see, exactly recognises, what I have been claiming for the whole class; and, my claim is strengthened, by the very same kind of praise being given to Scougal.

The terms, you see, are appropriate; and convey my ideas as strictly, as if I had given them myself. But, in fact, what is true of one, will be found no less true of all: for, as I have repeatedly said, and hope, in some measure, shown, their leading features are not the mere contingent qualities of individuals, but the common properties of a species.<sup>1</sup> Let me, by one quotation more, do justice to Doddridge's enco-

<sup>1</sup> If I could doubt of any of the names I have given, it would be that of Mede; for, though one of the famous Cambridge men, that is, the contemporary of Smith, Cudworth, and Worthington; he did not, like them, give himself to what was inward and spiritual, so much as to what is curious; yet, even of him, a chief of the opposite party, Dr. Twisse, gave this character from Chaucer: —

"Sober in modest virtue was his speech,  
And gladly would he learn, and gladly teach."

mium on Scougal; and show, once for all, that these were really men, who might "speak of God's counsels, before kings, and not be ashamed."

After enumerating what men of the world value, he proceeds: — "But the pious person hath his thoughts far above these painted vanities: his felicity is not patched up of so mean shreds; it is simple, and comprised in one chief good. His soul advanceth itself, by rational passions, toward the Author of its being; the fountain of goodness and pleasure. 'He hath none in heaven but him, and there is none upon earth whom he desires beside him.'

"The knowledge of nature, hath been reputed a good means, to enlarge the soul, and breed in it a contempt of earthly enjoyments. He that hath accustomed himself to consider the vastness of the universe, and the small proportion which the point we live in bears to the rest of the world, may, perhaps, come to think less of some acres; or of that fame, which can at most spread itself through a small corner of this earth. Whatever be in this, sure I am, that the knowledge of God, and the frequent thoughts of heaven, must needs prove far more effectual, to elevate, and aggrandize the mind. When once the soul, by contemplation, is raised to any right apprehensions of the Divine perfections, and the foretastes of celestial bliss, how will this world, and all that is in it, vanish, and disappear before his eyes! With what holy disdain will he look down upon things, which are the highest objects of other men's ambitious desire! All the splendour of courts, all the pageantry of greatness, will no more dazzle his eyes, than the faint lustre of a glow-worm will trouble the eagle, after it hath been beholding the sun. He is little concerned, who obtained this dignity, or that fortune; who sits highest at table, or

goes first out of the door. His thoughts are taken up with greater matters, — how he shall please his Maker, and obtain an interest in that land of promise, some of the fruits whereof he hath already tasted. And, from thence ariseth that constant and equal frame of spirit, which the pious man's mind maintains in all the changes and vicissitudes of things ; while he who hath not his spirit balanced with religious principles, is lift up, and cast down, like a ship on the sea, with every variation of fortune ; and partakes, perhaps, of all the motions of this inferior world, whereunto his heart and affections are fastened : and, certainly, he must be far more happy and generous, both who sitteth loose to the world, and can, with the greatest calmness and tranquillity, possess his own soul, while all things without are in hurry and confusion. Private disasters cannot discompose him ; nor public calamities reach him : he looks upon the troubles, and combustions, of the world, as men do on the ruin, and desolation of cities, where men, in themselves, have little interest ; with no other concernment than that of pity, to see men trouble, themselves, and others, to so little purpose. If the world should shake, and the foundations of the earth be removed, yet would he rest secure, in a full acquiescence to the will of God, and constant dependence on his providence. He shall not be afraid of evil tidings ; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord."

Let me beg you, now, just to look back on the character of Bishop Benson ; and see, whether it does not wonderfully present to us some of the most majestic strokes, that Scougal has here given, only with a softened mildness, and more modest grandeur ; a difference, however, always liable to arise, from mere variety of constitution.

I have now said enough, and more than enough, I

fear, on the subject of the two classes, which have hitherto existed in the Church; yet, if I do not deceive myself, the statement, altogether, deserves deep and sober consideration. For, if the facts be so, how profound is that scheme of Providence which they imply?—how grand the results to which they lead; and, how interesting, as well as important, the duties, which may hence become incumbent on wiser Christians, in proportion as the plan gradually evolves? On this last point, I have hinted something, in general terms. But, I shall endeavour to speak a little more distinctly; after having just mentioned one or two matters, which I conceive not irrelevant to the ideas which I have already placed before you. If you refer to the quotation from “Milner’s History of the Church,” you may observe, how particularly he dates this distinction, of individual, and associated, Christians, from the supposed commencement of the reign of the Beast: and how expressly he describes the former, as preserved, by God’s effectual grace, in the midst of Popery; and the latter, as no less evidently supported, by his providence, in a state of persecution and much affliction.

Now, am I fanciful, in imagining, that I see this very distinction, pointed out in the Apocalypse? The period, which Milner refers to, is that, which, above all others, is most distinctly marked; and, there is, not, merely, a prediction of the approaching calamity, but we have, also, in figures not to be mistaken, a representation of the Divine care to preserve a remnant of true Christians, during the whole series of troubles. The remarkable circumstance, then, is this, that the plan of preservation is twofold; and it really would seem, as if the two parts had a striking correspondence, to the two descriptions of real servants of God, which Milner points out to us.

The two methods of preservation, in the vision, are, first, the "measuring of the temple of God, and the altar, and of them that worship therein;" while all the rest of the Holy City is given to the Gentiles, to be trodden down by them, forty and two months<sup>1</sup>: and, secondly, the providing for the concealment and sustenance of the mystical woman, in the wilderness, for the same exact period, — twelve hundred and sixty days.<sup>2</sup>

Now, observe, whether any imaginable figure could, more fitly, describe the condition of those, who have been kept, by effectual grace, in vital union with the Son of God, in the midst of surrounding corruptions; than that mystical fence, by which the true worshippers are guarded, and the necessary means of spiritual well-being secured to them, in the very centre of the desolated city.

Again, judge, whether the almost uniform circumstances of the associated bodies, which have been formed in different regions, and have been always, more or less, persecuted and afflicted, could be more aptly represented, than by the mystical woman, flying into the wilderness; that is, evidently, not remaining on the desolated scene at all, but going to a remote distance from it; where, nevertheless, the care of Heaven attends her, and preserves her, though in a low, and perilous condition, through the season of troubles.

These figures must mean something; and we cannot but suppose them to have a difference of import, correspondent to their difference of feature. Yet they, both, evidently, relate to God's preserva-

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<sup>1</sup> Rev. xi. 1, 2.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. xii. 1, &c.

tion of his church, during the protracted period of its greatest calamity. That this gracious plan has been effected, in the two several ways pointed out by Mr. Milner, is self-evident. How, then, I would almost ask, can we avoid making the application of this extraordinary twofold prediction, to the no less extraordinary twofold accomplishment?

There is a circumstance, in the measuring of the temple, which particularly deserves to be noticed. If you turn to Adam Clarke's translation of Fleury's "Manners of the Israelites," page 112., you will find, that the temple had two courts: an inner one, for the priests, where stood the altar of burnt-offerings; and an outer court, for the congregation, where they assembled at the stated hours of worship. But, you will, also, observe, that, when any one came to offer a distinct sacrifice for himself, he was permitted to enter the court of the priests, and advance as far as the altar, "for the purpose," says Dr. Lightfoot, "of presenting his sacrifice before God, and laying his hands upon it." Now, is it not remarkable, that this court, and this only, is measured; while the court of the congregation was to be involved in the general desolation? What could more exactly accord with the fact, (as Milner has stated it,) of a series of distinct, and individual, saints being kept up, in the most corrupt state of the visible church,—than the measuring of that precinct of the temple, where distinct, and individual, worshippers, only, were admitted, and leaving every thing exterior, to unrestrained profanation?

But, a question here naturally presents itself,—What is the precise thing, represented to us by the desolated city? It is, evidently, the Church,

in some respect or other ; for, else, it would not be the Holy City. It is, also, the visible Church : for the invisible Church is not capable of being thus profaned ; it being that, whose security, and permanence, the twofold plan provides for. But, it is, also, the visible Church, most obviously, in that view of it, in which it has suffered the deepest, widest, and most continued injury. If so, what can we understand by the Holy City, but the great body of national establishments ; inasmuch as, here, and here only, it is, that the predicted treading down has been realised, to the letter ? Observe, also, how strictly this falls in with the fact, which I have, already, dwelt upon, — of established churches having been so exclusively the region of Mr. Milner's distinct and individual Christians.

It has been, nearly, taken for granted, that the treading down, here spoken of, means, the overwhelming introduction of something, akin to Gentile idolatry, into religious worship. Thus, Doddridge says, that he has “ no doubt it means the profanation of the Church, by growing idolatry and superstition ;” though some few “ should retain their purity.” But, an objection to this interpretation is, that it would involve Mr. Milner's individual saints in the treading down ; the best of these being superstitious, and what is deemed idolatrous, as well as others. Who of these ever hesitated, to bow to the Host, or invoke the saints ? Fénelon actually composed a Litany to the Virgin ; which stands, along with an excellent Litany to our Saviour, in his spiritual works. It appears to me, therefore, that we must seek the chief meaning of the treading down, in something more incompatible with true piety ; and nothing, in my opinion, corresponds

more strictly, or more fully, to the prophetic figure, than that long, as well as universal, subjection of national establishments, to the views, and purposes, of mere men of the world. These last, I conceive exactly to answer to the true New Testament idea of Gentiles, who are there said, "not to know God" (1 Thess. iv. 5.); "to seek what they shall eat, and what they shall drink," &c. (St. Matt. vi. 31, 32.); and to have "the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, by the ignorance which is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts." (Eph. iv. 18.) These descriptions, as strictly characterise the persons, who, for the last thousand years, have chiefly swayed established churches, as they do the Gentiles themselves: and, hence, God's visible temple has been made a house of merchandise; its highest trusts, and holiest functions, being prostituted, without compunction, to the grossest objects of personal, family, or party aggrandisement. I cannot but think, that this notion of the treading down, will agree, better than any other, with both what we see, and what we may yet hope for. This treading down is, obviously, that, which truly lays waste the city of God. Experience tells us, that, while this remains, the removal of superstition, or, what is called idolatry, produces but little radical change. I, therefore, have long thought, that commentators on the Apocalypse have been used to take much too exterior a view of the evils of the church. They have talked, as if the follies of Popery, and its supposed false doctrines, were the grand obstacle to the advance of true religion; forgetful of what the secularising spirit was doing, to the present moment, in the best reformed national church in the world. "How



can ye believe," said our blessed Redeemer, "who receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour which cometh from God only?" Our Saviour did not, here, censure the regular order, which God himself had appointed; but he censured the abuse of it, to selfish gratification, and the nourishing of depravity. By this, the Jewish church was trodden down spiritually, before it was trodden down literally. And, how exactly have national churches, for many centuries, resembled what we read of the Jewish church in the Gospels! How reasonably, then, might the same external catastrophe be apprehended, if we were not encouraged, by the sure word of prophecy, to look for the removal, not the redoubling, of the calamity.

But, if these remarks be founded, observe the importance which they give to national Churches, in spite of all their present profanation. Abused as they are, they are (that is, the great body of them is), still, the Holy City; and are, one day, to be reclaimed, by their great Founder and Owner, and raised to that true glory, to which they were destined. I, really, do not feel myself to be fanciful here: I am compelled to adopt this meaning, by the simple fact, of there being none else, except what must be applied to the other very different case, of "the woman in the wilderness;" and, I am confirmed, by the still more comfortable consideration, already so much dwelt upon, that, corrupted as they have been, a succession of the sublimest Christians, in the strictest and happiest accordance with the prediction, has still been preserved in the midst of them.

It is remarkable, that the same two figures are used to represent the Church, both in the Old, and New Testament, — a *Woman*, and a *City*; and, I think

it will be seen, that they are used, in the Old Testament, pretty much with this difference of meaning. When the Church is represented, as weak, as afflicted, as an object of commiseration, or of tender attention, the figure of a Woman is made use of; and, on the contrary, when its permanency, its enlargement, its restoration from a desolate condition, or its final and consummate prosperity, are pointed out to us, the emblem of a City is almost uniformly resorted to.

I believe this rule will apply, equally, to the Apocalyptic Woman, and City; and it is reasonable it should, as the predictions of the Old Testament have, so generally, a reference to the events of the Gospel dispensation. But, is there not an additional fitness, in using these two figures to illustrate the vicissitudes of the Christian Church; inasmuch as its earlier and later states are represented to have such unlikeness, in their external circumstances, to each other, as to make it impossible, for one simple allegory, to do justice to the thing signified?

I will, here, only state my supposition. I conceive, then, that, so long as the Church of Christ was, in the whole, or in any considerable or operative part, exclusively dependent on its own spiritual energies, and, instead of being aided, by any earthly power, utterly discountenanced, and oppressed by all, — so long, I say, and so far, it was most suitable to use the emblem of a Woman; because, under that allegorical representation, weakness and affliction, on the part of the Church, and tenderness and consolation, on the part of the great Head of the Church, might be most impressively illustrated. On the other hand, when the Church gets outward strength, when it bears the characters of stability and permanency, — begins to be established in the top of the mountains,

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and to be exalted above the hills, and the nations begin to flow unto it; then, and in every such respect, it seems equally congruous, to adopt the figure of a City; because, this, evidently, furnishes the aptest imagery, for portraying such happier, or more promising circumstances.

Now, it is obvious that the Christian Church, was, in its commencement, and for some ages after, wholly in the first of these situations; and, it is no less manifest, from the sure word of prophecy, that, when God's great plans have come to full maturity, it will be, as perfectly and entirely, in the latter situation. With this, then, I think I perceive a remarkable correspondence, in the prophetic arrangement. When the Church is first brought into view, we see her, evidently, as she was, in her earliest time, — “clothed with the sun; the moon under her feet; and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.” This is, clearly, the Apostolic Church; which, being as weak without, as it was “all glorious within,” is represented by a Woman, and that only. But, when the plan, which thus commenced in weakness, becomes possessed of unrivalled power, and consummate felicity, then, “the Bride, the Lamb's Wife, appears as a Woman no more. It is wholly, and exclusively, a City. “I saw,” says St. John, “the new Jerusalem,” &c. If these ideas are founded, another, I believe, will not be less so; which is, that, as the Church is, at the first, wholly the Woman, and, at the last, wholly the City; so, during a certain intermediate period, she is, both the one and the other: for nothing can be clearer, than that it was for the same space of time, that the Woman is in exile, and the City trodden down. Now, what, I would almost say, *can be* the import of this, but, that the final and consummate form of the Church, should,

in some way or other, have its foundation distinctly laid, at a very early period ; but, that its progress should, by some calamity, be checked ; and that, in consequence of this, it should remain, for ages, in a state of ruinous decay ; that, in the mean time, however, the original form of the Church should not wholly pass away, — but, that a succession of imitators of the Apostles, in their social spirit, their evangelizing zeal, their independence on secular support, should still, though in the midst of depressing circumstances, keep up a systematic interest of piety in the world, until the treading down of the Holy City should come to an end.

Judge, now, whether I do not ascribe her due share of honour, to the Woman in the wilderness, when I thus suppose her, a continuance of the Apostolic Church. But, when I pay her this unfeigned tribute, I must stop ; because, as I said, I see nothing, subsequent to her concealment in the wilderness, stated respecting her, except where it is said, in chap. xix. verses 7. and 8., that “ the Lamb’s Wife had made herself ready ; and that, to her, it was granted, that she should be arrayed in fine linen, white and clean ; ” an event, which, evidently, implies, that the time of her exile was at an end, and, of course, gives the idea of the Woman returning into the City, from which, though it was not expressly said, we may suppose her to have been driven, — the time of her flight into the wilderness, and of the City being given to Gentiles, being one and the same. After this, however, we hear of a City, and a City only ; the ruins are repaired, and the united import of the prophecies is realised. This is implied, in a single passage of the 20th chapter, in which the last abortive effort of the grand enemy is described : —

“ They,” — that is, those of the nations whom the Devil shall succeed in deceiving, “ went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved City; and fire came down from God, out of heaven, and destroyed them.” Observe the epithet, *beloved*. Even when it was laid waste, it was the Holy City; it was God’s own special property, and it could not be alienated. But, now, it appears like what it is, — the object of God’s peculiar favour. Exactly in correspondence with that luminous prophecy, — “ Thou shalt be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. Thou shalt no more be termed forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed desolate: but thou shalt be termed Hephzibah, and thy land, Beulah; for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married.”

In the mean time, so long as the treading down continues, the Woman, and the City, are clearly separate from each other. Nothing can be more distinct, than a City, and a wilderness; nothing more dissimilar, than the being trodden down by enemies, and the being sheltered from them. I say, again, therefore, where shall we find the trodden-down City, but in the great body of national churches? For Christianity, as a collective system, exists only under the two forms, of national churches, and sects or societies, — or, as Mr. Milner calls them, associated bodies; and, therefore, were the resemblances less striking, the circumstance, of two distinct figures, would, of itself, require the reference of them to those two forms. But when, in addition to this, we find the respective situations of associated bodies, and national churches, so strictly, and for such a length of time, agreeing with the prophetic images, I

own, I cannot see the shadow of an objection, to the meaning which I have given.

If this conclusion be founded, it will follow, that, the previous existence of the city, which the treading down supposes, may, most naturally, be referred to the period, commencing with Constantine, and ending with the establishment of the Papacy, and of the revived Roman, that is, the German, empire. I, however, do not concern myself with calculations of time; but merely attend to facts. The origin of national establishments, is, evidently, to be dated, from the merging of the Roman empire into the Church; and, therefore, I conceive, we cannot hesitate to consider this, as the epoch of the Church assuming its new, and, as it appears, more permanent, character. We are, no doubt, as I have already hinted, to consider the Holy City, in this first stage of its duration, the residence of the Mystical Woman; since the twofold view is not intimated, until the commencement of the calamitous period: and, with this, history seems exactly to accord; as separate sects, and the Papal usurpation, appear, evidently, to have grown up together.

If any objection should be made, to the very important place I am giving to national establishments, on the ground of it being said, in Scripture, that Christ's "kingdom is not of this world," and, that "God hath chosen the weak things of this world, to confound the things which are mighty;" from which, some may infer, that the secular instrumentality, which my interpretation supposes, is not consonant with the spirit of the Gospel; I must beg such objectors to consider, whether this supposed inconsistency will not equally attach, to any adequate fulfilment of the great current of prophecy; because,

let this take place when it may, it must suppose, essentially, what is here objected to; it must suppose a state of things, directly opposite to that weakness, and poverty, which marked the origin of Christianity. Instead of our Lord's kingdom being, then, not of this world, the kingdoms of this world will be the kingdoms of our Lord; instead of the "princes of this world," not knowing the Lord of Glory," "all shall know him, from the least to the greatest." It is, indeed, remarkable, that, in the predictions respecting this intellectual period, no particular is more dwelt upon, than the homage of kings. See, for instance, Psalm ii. 10, 11.; lxxii. 10, 11. Isaiah, lii. 15.; lx. 3. 10, 11, 12. 16.

Now, what can be more evident, than that, in proportion as this state of things takes place, the instruments must vary accordingly; and, instead of base things, and things that are despised, and things that are not, being used, to bring to naught the things that are, there will be, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah, the flocks of Kedar, the rams of Nebaioth, the ships of Tarshish, and the cedars of Lebanon, — all ministering to the Divine pleasure; beautifying the place of his sanctuary; and making the place of his feet glorious. All which prophetic terms must mean, that every thing, that implies greatness, or beauty, or dignity, will then be made subservient to the glory of its Supreme Owner and Author; and, all, harmoniously concur, in the full accomplishment of his adorable purposes.

But, if this be a consummation clearly predicted, it is reasonable to infer, that there would be suitable plans of Providence, for bringing it about. Throughout all God's dispensations, as far as we can contemplate them, we see preliminary steps taken, a long

time before the event, to which they relate ; and a gradual process may, sometimes, be traced, in which obscure, and unlikely beginnings, grow up, at length, into a grand and beautiful result. If, therefore, the kingdoms of this world are, finally, to become the kingdoms of our Lord ; what could we conceive more probable, than that, in some way or other, the movements of Providence should be pointing toward this object, and, perhaps, the first stamina of the great future system be actually discoverable ? Here, then, I must say, national church establishments, appear to me to come in, with the most perfect congruity. I speak not, of course, of the internal features of any particular establishment ; but, of the mere act of the government of a country, in solemnly adopting, and maintaining, the Christian religion, under whatever form, as a vital part of the national polity. In this, I say, as begun by Constantine, and carried on, since, throughout Christian Europe, I do think, I see the first outline, however rude, of that state of things, to which the prophecies I have referred to, with many others, authorise us to look forward. If we find, by continual experience, that the profession of Christianity in an individual, though received but as a Turk or Jew receives his religious creed, is an apt preparative, for his attaining the spirit of Christianity ; may we not, by parity of reason, admit, that kings and governments may be led, by Divine Providence, to become guardians, and patrons of religion, as an external system, in order to their, one day, becoming the efficient supporters, of its inward spirit, and substance ? In a word, let us form to ourselves the most perfect idea that we can, of that subjection of earthly potentates to the kingdom of Christ, toward which, all prophecy con-



verges ; and then, let us say, whether it would be any thing else, but the principle of church establishments, freed from abuse, purified from drossy mixtures, and applied, exclusively, to the proper object ?

When, to these considerations, I add the fact, which I have so much enlarged upon, — of a vital seed being uniformly preserved, in the centre of the most corrupt establishments ; when I take into account, not only the wonderful continuity, but the intrinsic excellence, of this seed ; how defective the church, at large, must have been without it ; and how clearly the attainment of general excellence must imply the coming up to this standard, and the crowning even the very best laid foundation with this superstructure ; — I cannot but rest in the conclusion, that establishments, however corrupted or abused, have been, and are, an essential part of the Divine scheme ; that they are, even now, invaluable, in virtue of the quality of that piety, which they have uniformly produced, in however limited a quantity ; and, that they will yet be the scene of the most glorious results of Divine wisdom and goodness, in consequence of the treaders down being expelled for ever ; the Mystical Woman returning, from her exile, into the City ; the piety of the wilderness, uniting itself to the piety of the temple ; and the latter, thus more than ever perfected, diffusing itself, from individual to individual, from family to family, from country to country, from generation to generation. After all I have said, I think you will, yourself, fully interpret these mystical terms. I, therefore, proceed to observe, that the view just given, may, possibly, furnish the best explanation, of what has puzzled all commentators, — the two witnesses. It is wonderful, what odd schemes have been resorted to, for solving the mystery of *two wit-*

nesses. But, if the fact be, that teachers of justification, or, as I would call it, of conversion, have, as Mr. Wesley says, been distinct from teachers of sanctification; and if, also, (as, I think, is no less certain,) the former have, generally, been found in the associated class, and the latter, in the distinct, and individual class of Christians; are not here, I would ask, two witnesses, in the most direct and fullest sense? One, the witness of first principles; the other, of what concerns the going on to perfection: the former, connected with the Mystical Woman in the wilderness; the latter, belonging to those who are preserved in the measured temple.

But it is remarkable, that the two witnesses are to prophesy, only during the period of the treading down. Their function is to terminate with the season of calamity; they are to be put to death; their bodies are to lie exposed three prophetic days and a half; and the inhabitants of the earth are to rejoice over them, as if those, who had troubled them, were for ever put to silence. I fear, all this must mean some deep, but transient depression of all true religion, which is yet to take place, and is to be the last that the Church of Christ shall suffer. But the witnesses unexpectedly revive, not to resume their prophetic office, but to ascend to heaven in a cloud. That is, as I conceive, the twofold scheme shall have a most honourable conclusion; as being, not suppressed, by the efforts of enemies, but superseded, by a more perfect plan, that of complete unity, such as will accomplish our Lord's last prayer:—"That they all may be one; that the world may know, that Thou hast sent me!"

I will mention one other passage of Scripture; which, I am inclined to think, has some reference to

the same great event. I am pretty sure I have mentioned to you my idea of the parables, in the 13th chapter of St. Matthew, being a connected series; descriptive of the various successive circumstances of the Christian Church. But, I have now to add, that, in my mind, the two parables, of the Treasure in the Field, and the Pearl, allude, in a remarkable manner, to the two plans of preservation, — the former, agreeing strictly with the case of associated Christians, or those of the wilderness class; the latter, with individual Christians, or the temple class.

I am aware that I may be thought, here, to be giving a loose to fancy: but I cannot help concluding, that our Lord always speaks with the most entire precision; and, therefore, never uses new figures, but for the purpose of conveying new ideas. Now, mark the difference between these two parables, and see whether each does not wonderfully correspond to the respective case.

In the first place, nothing can be plainer, than that he, who finds the treasure, stumbles, as it were, on a thing for which he was not inquiring; but, having discovered it, he experiences the strongest emotions: fear, lest he should yet be bereft of it; joy, at the prospect of possessing it; but, he does not so much as attempt to gain itself, alone. He has found it in a field, out of which it does not seem practicable to convey it; he, therefore, at the cost of his all, purchases the field, that he may enjoy the treasure.

On the other hand, the merchant, who meets with the pearl, succeeds, in consequence of a continued inquiry; to which he had devoted himself, as to the business of his life. When he discovers the valued object, there is, accordingly, no particular emotion. His estimation of his prize, is deep and cordial; but

his conduct, is not impassioned, though it is as decisive as that of the other. The great distinction, however, is, — that, in the one case, that which contains the wished-for benefit, is the thing purchased ; in the other case, the object is attained alone, without the slightest appendage.

Now, how could the two methods of arriving at true religion, have been more distinctly delineated ? Those conversions, which resemble the accidental stumbling on hid treasure, have, almost all, been effected by the instrumentality of the associated Christians. Such emotions as our Lord describes, have, more or less, attended them ; and the party thus impressed, has been led, by a uniform instinct, to seek the blessing thus discovered, by attaching himself to the body among whom he had met with it. Has not this been the universal practice ? and what is this, but purchasing the field, in order to be master of the treasure ?

Not so, the individual Christian, or temple worshipper. He is not impelled by accident, nor dependent on external instrumentality ; he understands what he would be at ; his deliberate choice has engaged him in the pursuit ; he is his own guide, his own factor. It is a pearl, and that only, which he is looking for ; and he obtains it, simply ; it is quite his own, and he has no encumbrance along with it. It is, also, a perfectly portable possession. He that buys the field, must adhere to his field. He that gains the pearl, can carry his wealth about with him.

But, I am struck with the place, which these two parables hold in the series. You will observe, that, subsequently to the first great sowing (represented in the first parable), the tares have been mingled with the

good seed ; the grain of mustard-seed has become a great tree ; and the leaven is so blended with the meal, as to be no longer visible. This, evidently, brings us to a period, in which outward Christianity has grown to vast extent ; but inward Christianity (or its possessors) is not externally apparent. The question, then, is, how shall the work of leavening go on ? Our Saviour instructs us in this, by the two parables referred to. In the former, he shows us, in what manner inward religion shall be communicated, even where it is not looked for. To careless, ignorant adults, by means which shall, in some measure, surprise them into piety, but to which means they must attach themselves, in order to preserve that piety, — the case exactly, as I take it, of conversions amongst associated Christians : and, in the latter, he, no less, illustrates the manner, in which individual piety must be attained in establishments ; where there are no want of means, for those who are disposed to guide themselves ; but, evidently, no provision for surprising, or stimulating. But, I cannot help thinking, that there is something indicated, in placing the parable of the Treasure first, and that of the Pearl afterward. I conceive, it agrees with what I have been supposing, in different parts of the foregoing pages, that the associated plan is, at length, to merge in the temple plan ; and that the latter, as I have already said, improved to the utmost, by the spirit of the former being united with it, is to constitute the last, and most excellent effect of the grace of Christ, in this lower world.

I proceed, now, to the few observations I have to add, respecting the practical results of the twofold scheme, especially in its present stage.

In the first place, can I help saying, that, if the scheme have any truth in it, it must, proportionally, imply duty the most obvious, and the most obligatory. For, to know that there is such a scheme, is to be indispensably bound to promote its object. Turn to Mr. Wesley's sermon on "The More Excellent Way," and observe his exhortation, to those who are in a state of grace, to ascend, from the lower to the higher path. That is a most remarkable passage; it falls in with the substance of what I have been dwelling upon. Only, I differ from Mr. Wesley in this: — he thinks, that every truly converted person has it in his power, by a resolute choice, to take possession, as it were, of the higher walk. I, humbly, think otherwise. I think, that, in many instances, there may be, from mind, habits, or circumstances, a kind of incapacity for the higher walk; otherwise, there could hardly be that substance of safety in the lower walk, which Mr. Wesley allows to it. But, even in capable persons, I cannot resolve their difference, into what takes place merely in their will. I think, that whoever wishes to pursue the higher path, must take all his measures accordingly; he must not neglect outward, but he must prefer inward business. He must frequent the company of them that are perfect. If he finds them not among the living, where, too generally, they are rare, and, even where they exist, unapparent, — he must go to the dead. Above all, he must, in a sense, be a distinct and individual saint, even though, outwardly, connected with others. Let him act with others as he may, his supreme pursuit must be within, — his one concern must be, that expressed so compendiously by our Redeemer, — "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." He, and he only, that adopts this plan, will succeed; for means must be

suited to ends. The laws of nature have bound them together.

But, if there be ground for Mr. Wesley's warm exhortation, on the supposition of individual interest, which is all he presses, how much more urgent is the case, if it be a fact, that God intends this more excellent way to become prevalent in the latter days? This persuasion, not only indispensably enjoins the effort, but it gives infinite encouragement that it will be successful. For, what honest mind can fail in that, which God has been laying plans for, five thousand years and more, to bring human beings to; and by their being brought to which, his great design of infinite love, respecting this world, can, alone, be accomplished?

How much could I say, upon this subject! But I have gone on, already, beyond all calculation. I will, therefore, give you but the briefest possible hints, of what I might, yet, enlarge upon. I think, then, that John Wesley's chief business was, to form a more effectual connection between the two schemes,—of first principles, and perfection,—than had been even attempted before. I think, the plans of Providence, respecting him, have an astonishing tendency to this object. He was, beyond any man in his day, trained in the school of the temple worshippers, before he was inoculated from the wilderness; and the care which was taken to prevent any mixture, in this latter process, by which his pre-existing principles of holiness could have been impaired, is matter of wonder to any attentive observer. Lest Calvinism should, in any manner, creep in, a teacher, himself yet perfectly unadulterated, is brought from the remote parts of

Germany. And what, in this critical instance, did John Wesley chiefly learn? This is a point, which I wish all his followers understood clearly; and, I must add, which I wish he himself could have opened out as consistently, as he has, here and there, expressed it happily.

He learned, then, in my mind, simply this, — that there is a divine plan for making man holy; and that, therefore, in that way only, holiness can be sought effectually. He knew before, most exactly, that the essence of holiness is, the love of God, rooted in the heart, as its master affection; but, he imagined, that he must seek this in itself, immediately, by aiming at the exercise of love; by thinking over motives of love; by laborious abstraction from outward things, and painful combating with his own corruptions and weaknesses. But, at the moment I refer to, he learned, that love could never grow out of this self-impelling mechanism, any more than blowing with bellows would light a fire; that the one only root of love was, faith, — a grace wrought in us by Omnipotence, — and, therefore, to be implored, and waited for, and panted after; but, never to be self-manufactured; that, therefore, his one business was, to obtain faith from God; that this, when wrought, would speak for itself; and, in proportion, as it was divinely wrought, would surmount every thing, facilitate every thing, be pregnant with every thing.

“By salvation,” says John Wesley, “I mean, a present deliverance from sin; a recovery of the divine nature; the renewal of our souls, after the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness; in justice, mercy, and truth. Now, without faith,



we cannot be thus saved ; for we cannot rightly serve God, unless we love him ; and we cannot love him, unless we know him ; neither can we know God, but by faith. Therefore, salvation by faith, is only, in other words, the love of God, by the knowledge of God ; or the true recovery of the image of God, by a true spiritual acquaintance with him."

This, then, is John Wesley's view of first principles ; to which is only to be added, that this faith can be obtained by prayer only ; and the object which it reveals with the deepest effect, on us, depraved, weak, sensitive creatures, as we are, is God manifest in the flesh, — a view of the divine Redeemer, as living, acting, teaching, dying, rising, reigning, and, now, our ever-present friend and benefactor ; the shepherd of our souls, the elder brother of our spirits, the king of our hearts ; (but, I would say, *dying*, with peculiar emphasis ; because, to know the crucified Redeemer aright, must crucify us to the world, and the world to us). Such a view, I say, of this transcendent object, as begets predominant love, is the faith by which our paralysed souls are reanimated, our worldly minds made heavenly ; for Jesus Christ is all excellence, and to love him truly, is, to love all that is worth loving in the universe. It is the tuning of the heart, — the fitting it for the universal concert.

Now, this view of John Wesley, connects faith so directly, and exclusively, with holiness, as to make the former, nothing but the root, and principle, of the latter. But, the grand point is, that it teaches how to become holy, in the briefest and simplest way. "Would you be freed from the bondage of corruption ; would you grow in grace,

in grace in general, or in any grace in particular? If you would, your way is plain ; — ask from God more faith ; beg of him morning, noon, and night, while you walk by the way, while you sit in the house, when you lie down, and when you rise up ; beg of him, simply, to impress divine things more deeply on your heart, — to give you more and more of the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” This is John Wesley’s central lesson ; and it never was, it never can be, excelled. It is astonishing, from how many labyrinths of perplexed, and thorny theology, this simple view, at once, relieves. Who can miscarry, whose habit it is, thus to go, continually, to God ; to ask, what God is so willing to bestow, and which, when granted, cannot but be effectual?

In teaching this doctrine, I conceive, John Wesley has formed the true junction, between foundation and superstructural principles ; and he, who, with this key-stone truth, employs as much of his leisure as he can, in reading those, whom Mr. Wesley has described as teachers of sanctification, and adds thereto, constant watchfulness, and the prayer of the closet and the heart, cannot fail to go on, from strength to strength.

This, then, I deem the vital spirit of John Wesley’s true mission. The catching this does not depend, on embracing his outward system of societies, and classes, and bands. Nay, his outward system may lose this vital spirit, without suspecting it. Therefore it is, that I would recommend such a preference of this one thing, as would imply, not dereliction of, but, certainly, independence on, any outward system whatever.

I need add no more : you yourself will connect, with these last observations, several things I have said in the foregoing pages ; to retrace which, explicitly, would be needless to you, and is, at this moment, out of my power, having only time to add, that I am, most truly and cordially,

Yours,

ALEXANDER KNOX.

September 25. 1807.

## UNFINISHED LETTER TO JOSEPH BUTTERWORTH, ESQ.

Dawson Street, Sept. 3. 1808.

MY DEAR MR. BUTTERWORTH,

YOUR letter of the 8th ult. would have been highly acceptable to me, if it had not told me of your accident, and confinement. In addition to what you then said, of your prospect of recovery, I was glad to hear, since, from Mr. Cooke, that you were clearly mending, and had laid aside your crutches.

I should have been very sorry you had not consulted your own convenience, in the matter of returning the letter.<sup>1</sup> I have been solicitous, only, that it should not be lost; as my thoughts, when once registered on any subject of importance, become valuable to me, were it only that I may know, what I did think, at such a time, on such a point. From some such records, I am now able to ascertain, to myself, that, though I have been as busy a thinker as most people, my mind has always adhered to the same radical principles, and that changes in me have either been circumstantial, or merely progressive; I should also say, perhaps, expansive. But, certainly, in no essential point, do I seem to myself to have veered about, from the age of eighteen, to the present hour. My conduct varied much, from that time, until I was thirty-nine, but not my principles; and

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<sup>1</sup> Of Sept. 25. 1807.

yet I was ever, I believe, open to conviction, and ready to have émbaced, whatever could have been proved true.

Doubtless, many thoughts have presented, and are still presenting, themselves to my mind, which, once, I had no idea of; but these, in, I believe, every instance, are as much the growth of former rooted principles, as multiplied branches grow from one and the same main stem. Of such an inward vegetation, I am always conscious; and I equally seem to myself to perceive, the novelty of the fresh shoot, and its connection with what had been produced before. I presume, other minds would have the same tendency, if full room were left for it. In me, a series of providential circumstances, for which I have infinite cause to be thankful, has favoured the growth in a peculiar manner; it being my lot, to have no rival object; and it being the good and gracious pleasure of God, to spare no pains, in breaking up, and bettering, the ground of my mind and heart. In fact, no one can owe more to the great husbandman than myself; for, most certainly, I would not exchange the mental garden, with which he has been pleased to enrich me, for any or all the delights of the Eden of our first parents. I am aware, that an honest looker on, might think it right to warn me, against being too much pleased with the branches and the foliage, so as not sufficiently to look for fruit. But, I humbly hope, such a censure would arise, from the truth of the case not being perfectly apprehended; and that, in fact, if the fruit were not there also, my satisfaction would be very small. Besides, though the leaves of the tree of knowledge, serve too often, still, for a covering to the serpent, the tree of life has its leaves too; and even those leaves, are for the heal-

ing of the nations. It is this tree, most assuredly, that I wish to cultivate : for, as far as my own weakness has allowed, I have already found in it, all that, united, which made the olive tree, the fig tree, and the vine, in Jotham's parable, refuse to go, to be promoted over the trees. I seem to myself, to have made something of a like refusal, in turning away from political life, and choosing my present retired course ; and, as I never have yet, so, I believe assuredly, I never shall wish, to recall that preference.

I think it not impossible, but that the very pleasurable, and, I hope, somewhat profitable, speculations, with which my mind is entertained, almost continually, may be a gracious compensation to me, for that shadow of a sacrifice, which I appeared to make ; but I might more truly say, the prudent and happy choice, which I was enabled to exercise. Solomon made a choice which pleased God ; and the highest intellectual pleasures were a great part of his reward. The Ephesians were addicted to curious arts ; and, doubtless, indulged that curiosity in forbidden ways : but, when convinced of their fault, they made no compromise ; they burned their seductive books, regardless of the cost of them ; and, as it should seem, in strict remuneration, an Epistle is addressed to them, by St. Paul, in which, as I conceive, he has communicated more of that " wisdom," which he spoke " among them that were perfect," than in all his other Epistles put together. The Revelation is the only part of the Apostolic Writings that exceeds it, or can vie with it ; and it is remarkable, that the Church of Ephesus stands first of those seven, to whom this wonderful Book was immediately directed.

The serious truth is, I value what God has done

for me, in giving a certain direction to my thoughts, next to what, I trust, he has done for my heart ; because, I more and more find, that the wise exercise of the understanding, is indispensable to progress in the spiritual life. An unoccupied mind is likely, soon, to be an ill-occupied mind ; and they, who do not learn to think of divine things, will soon come to feel them less, if they continue to feel them at all. In the generality of cases, vital religion begins, undoubtedly, in sensation. The infant Christian tastes of the heavenly gift, the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come. But the divine life will not thus advance. It must, as in the natural case alluded to, proceed, from what is merely sensitive, to what is rational. The milk must be superseded by strong meat ; and, what originated in pure feeling, must grow to maturity, by superadded reflection ; they of full age, being, according to St. Paul, those only, “ who have their senses exercised, by reason of use, to discern both good and evil.”

I allow that, in this advancing process, leisure, and an intellectual habit of mind, may, through God's blessing, be eminently beneficial ; and, other things being equal, they, who improve those providential benefits, will be, proportionately, possessed of the maturity, which St. Paul has described, in the few, but full, words just quoted. But, what I am speaking of, is, notwithstanding, the deep concern of all Christians, who can understand the subject. He, who cannot reflect, and can only feel, must, of course, remain a babe all the days of his life ; and if, “ in wickedness,” he be also “ a child,” he will not suffer on account of defects, which were his misfortune, not fault ; but, whoever can think, is bound to think as a Christian. He, who can be intellectual in any worldly way, is

called to be, also, spiritually intellectual. In outward things, we must give alms of such things as we have, in order to their being clean to us ; and, in inward matters, we must, equally, give a portion of every faculty we have, to things spiritual and divine, in order to our using it prosperously, or even safely, on common objects. Nay, if we have mind at all, we clearly do not love the Lord our God, as we are commanded to love him, if we do not love him with our mind, as well as with our heart, and soul, and strength.

See, how I, instinctively, fasten upon an old point ; for, this is, substantially, the same subject I have been, again and again, discussing. I hope and trust, you will not misunderstand me. I do not mean, most assuredly, that plain men should make themselves philosophers, or casuists ; but, merely, that each should not only desire to grow in grace, but also, set himself to enquire, how this object may, most certainly, be accomplished. I acknowledge, I mean, that a man should not content himself with any thing outward ; with outward activity in matters, however useful ; with outward blamelessness, however full and complete ; with outward means of grace, of whatever kind ; nor, last of all, with the occasional revival of former feelings of pleasure or comfort, in those means ; but, that he should, above all, (not to the exclusion of these, but along with these, so far as Providence leads him to them,) seek a state of mind, which will not materially fluctuate ; which will not consist, merely, in feelings and affections, however sincere and genuine, but in such a clear, steady, matter-of-fact view of things divine and eternal, as will make him as coolly, calmly, deliberately, and reflectively religious, as the men of this world, who are wise in their ge-



neration, are coolly, calmly, deliberately, and reflectively worldly. If it should be asked, how are we to seek this? I say, I must ever persevere in saying,—in means of grace, which will be deepening, rather than exciting; in inward and private, more than in outward and public exercises. I do not say, I never meant to say, “Relinquish, or neglect these.” On the contrary, I think that these, used as they should be,—that is, subordinately to private means of grace,—will be both pleasant and beneficial. But still, I am obliged to rest convinced, that it is not by any thing, in which we are externally excited, that growth will be attained, or habits be formed. That such excitements are necessary to beginners, and continue to be necessary to those, who do not pursue self-culture, I am ready to grant; but, I must believe, that means of commencement, and means of progress, are no more the same, than milk and strong meat are the same; and, that no innocent mistake tends more to obstruct the good of well-intentioned people, than the overlooking the just distinction, which should be made, in this most important instance.

Perhaps, I have not made myself perfectly clear. Let me, then, elucidate my meaning. The July Methodist Magazine lies now before me. In an Essay on Preaching the Gospel, I read these expressions:—“The wretched custom of reading, instead of preaching, sermons, in the Church of England, has, in its causes and consequences, been more injurious to the interests of vital religion, than all the other evils, with which it has to combat. What effect would Demosthenes have produced on the Athenian citizens, by reading to them an argumentative piece, on the consequences of their being conquered by Philip of Macedon? And what effect has reading

sermons, confessedly excellent, in point of divinity and composition, produced in many, if not in most, parts of the United Kingdom? Has it been instrumental, in turning any considerable number of sinners from the error of their ways?"

This sounds very plausible, and, I believe it not wholly unfounded in fact. Indeed, I fully allow, that, if "turning sinners from the error of their ways," were to be taken as a definition, and exclusive standard, the censure, here pronounced, could scarcely be done away. But this being not the sole object of preaching, but there being another, still more weighty, end to be answered, let us hear a capital judge, how far the same remarks will hold good, in this other instance.

"Monday, 25th" (Oct. 1756), says Mr. Wesley, "I began reading that excellent book, 'The Gospel Glass' to the morning congregation; a method, which I find more profitable, for instruction in righteousness, than any other manner of preaching."

Now, only compare these two statements; and see, whether the unqualified denouncement, in the first, is not effectually refuted, by the powerful testimonial in the second. Yet, as I said, were the point to be determined by number of adult conversions, I have no doubt but the more fervid method of preaching, would carry it, by hundreds to one. How, then, shall we reconcile this fact, with Mr. Wesley's testimony in favour of so very different a method, but by fully admitting the principle I have been maintaining, of the means of progress being materially different, from what have been, usually, the means of commencement?

This is a subject almost as copious, as it is important. I must, therefore, stop where I am. It strictly connects, in my mind, with the train of thought in

my long letter ; but, what is of far greater moment, it is the point, I conceive, of all others, most studiously elucidated and urged, in the New Testament. It has, more than once, struck me, that, if the mere first work, usually called regeneration, had been the object solely aimed at, the Gospel might have been contained in almost a few pages : but, because we needed, not only “ grace to quicken us,” but “ truth ” to guide us onward, and make us perfect ; not only fire, to soften the wax of nature, but a seal to impress it, when thus softened ; therefore (as well as for other further causes) has God, we may believe, extended, variegated, and, as it were, most exquisitely organised, his invaluable word, that it might, where rightly used, meet every faculty, every capability, every diversified combination, and every possible movement of the human mind ; in order to its being the apt instrument of doing, what God has promised to do, that is, “ exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think.”

On looking over what I have written, in this and the foregoing page, I perceive I must add a word or two, to explain my concession, of sinners not being “ turned from the error of their ways,” by even good sermons, in the Established Church. The writer in the Methodist Magazine evidently thinks, that, when he states this fact, he makes the weightiest charge that could be brought against persons delivering material truth. But a question may be asked, as to what seems to be the providential destiny of Established Churches ? Is it the actual design of them, as far as we can gather, to make adult converts ? If I should explicitly say, I think it is not, nineteen good people out of twenty would, doubtless, deem me very fanciful. Yet such is, seriously, my persuasion. It seems

to me as clear as the sun at noon, that making adult converts, is not the great ultimate object of the Gospel. On the contrary, I must regard it as but a preparatory, less perfect, supplemental operation; necessary, beyond doubt, in the first instance, and, so far as it takes place, a happy and valuable thing, in itself; the more so, as, in any state of things ever yet existent, it has been indispensable to the support of Christ's spiritual kingdom in the world. Still, I say, something far more perfect is to be looked for, and, in reality, must come, in order to the fulfilment of the prophecies. What this will be, Baxter clearly tells us, in his "Saints' Rest," where he says, "I do verily believe, that, if parents did their duty as they ought, the word, publicly preached, would not be the ordinary means of regeneration in the Church, but only without the Church, among infidels." The position is next to self-evident; since it is, clearly, the yet real infidelity of the professionally Christian world, that leaves room for adult conversions; and thus, what Baxter supposes, as morally certain, is the very description of future circumstances, given by the Prophets. "They shall no more teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me, from the least to the greatest." When, then, they are not to acquire the knowledge of the Lord from their coevals (their neighbours and brethren), how are they to come to it? No other way, clearly, but by having been "brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Thus, only, could public teaching be superseded; and, accordingly, we see, it is not said, "nor every one his child." On the contrary, this must be supposed; as the knowledge must come through some channel: and, as it can only

come, now, by public teaching, when it does not come through education; so, it can only come, then, by education, when it is not to come by public teaching. There are but the two methods: and, the ceasing of the one, implies the prevalence of the other; as the manna fell no more, when the children of Israel had once eaten of the corn of the Promised Land.

I own, to me, this prospect appears as delightful, as it is rational. The whole history of the Church seems to me to concur in evincing, that there is an inherent, almost incurable imperfectness, in strictly adult conversions. I mean, those, where no early foundation had been laid, and the child in no respect trained in the way that he should go. I imagine, that, with some bright exceptions, these instances would not, often, manifest more, than the lower degree of goodness, which St. Paul describes to us, in the two cases of the Corinthians and the Galatians, — I might add, of the Hebrews also. On the other hand, at that very period of the Christian Church, when the converting influences of Divine grace had been at their height, and when more adults were brought into the Church together, than at any time since, we find St. Paul passing, comparatively, by all those multitudes, and fixing on one individual, to whom he gives, without fear, that confidence, which he found abused by so many others. “I have none like-minded; for all men seek their own things, and not the things of Jesus Christ.” And why was Timothy thus (like Jabez of old), so much “more honourable than his brethren?” The reason is assigned: — “Because, from a child, thou hast known the Holy Scriptures;” — because “the faith, which dwelt first in thy grandmother, Lois, and in thy mother, Eunice; I am persuaded, dwells in thee also.” See, here, the

clear ground of St. Paul's reliance on Timothy ; and see, also, why he admonishes fathers not to provoke their children, lest they should be discouraged. He knew well, that the cause he had at heart could not fully prosper, but in proportion as such characters as Timothy were formed ; which, again, he was well persuaded, could be formed only by means of early training.

But, did St. Paul hope for what he desired ? I conceive, clearly not ; for, if he had so hoped, he would not so repeatedly, and emphatically, have predicted, perilous times, and fallings away. But, why did he not hope for it ? As it strikes me, because he saw so few Christians going on themselves, from the state of babes in spiritual things, to the state of establishment and maturity. He saw, no doubt, that they, who knew nothing but first principles, and had got those in the way of adult conversion, could not, in the nature of things, discharge the duty of religious education. Their own case being so different from that of their children, they would be liable to endless error, by arguing from the one to the other ; and to spoil what they wished to accomplish, through honest, but mistaken earnestness, to make their children feel, as they had felt themselves. The case was, doubtless, far otherwise, with those of them who proceeded onward, from spiritual infancy, to spiritual manhood : for this progress implies self-education ; and, consequently, the mature Christian, having educated himself, has, in some measure, learnt to educate his children. Nothing can be plainer, than that adult conversion supposes both means and movements, not only different from, but, in some respects, contrarious to, those which belong to early training ; but, it is as plain, on the other hand, that the advancing course, from merely sensitive,

to reflective, and matured piety, must have in it many things substantially identical, with what is implied, in “bringing up children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” Had, therefore, St. Paul seen more of such mature piety, we may presume, his hopes, for the future, would have been brighter; but his Epistles tell us, that those not addressed by him, were far more generally sincere than grown Christians; consequently, as, in the mean time, he had but one Timothy, so he did not reckon on the rising of many Timothys, in future.

To this hour, I conceive, the same causes, lead to the same consequences. God has, some way or other, kept up his Church; but, whatever other means have been used for this purpose, the education of the children of adult converts, has seldom yet, materially contributed to it. Therefore, in no instance yet, has a providential plan of reinvigoration implied permanence. The warmest piety of the Fathers, has undergone a change, if not manifested a declension, in the sons; and, in a third generation, little of the religious character has been discernible. I dare say, there are exceptions; and, where the world can be fairly shut out, as amongst the Moravians, such exceptions will be more numerous. But, I speak of what generally happens; and I submit the truth of what I say, to those who can correct me, if I am wrong,—to none before yourself.

The truth is, those reinvigorating movements, to which I allude, seem, in general, to have had little other efficacy, than in the matter of conversion. Those concerned in them, have seldom understood much beyond this. Individuals have exemplified more; but, even these have seldom been able to enforce on others, what they felt themselves. The instances of *sincere*

religion, in such cases, therefore, have been numerous; but those of *mature* religion few: life was widely diffused; but growth has been, comparatively, rare. Such societies have been nurseries, rather than schools. Education has gone on but indifferently, in themselves; and, of course, still more indifferently in their children. In some things, (intrinsically, things of great moment, and, in some providential way or other, of great result,) the people called Methodists, *i. e.* Wesleyan Methodists, have been distinguished, from all that have gone before in the same course. But, are they distinguished, either by self-education, or by the education of their children? They have, I grant, afforded noble instances of the former; more noble, and more numerous, I am inclined to think, than in any former similar society; and, there may be instances, too, of the latter. But, I still believe, that, in the one particular, they have been much more the means of eliciting important, indeed, I deliberately say, invaluable, principles, than of numerously exemplifying them; and, in the other instance, I suppose, their eulogium must be yet more limited. Those acute and lively observations on preaching, in the Magazine already referred to, go very nearly to prove, that, even some of the very best informed Methodists, have not so much as any correct ideas on the subject. I ground this remark, not on any reasonings of mine, but on the above-quoted judgment of Mr. Wesley.

If, then, such defects, so deeply affecting individuals, and so unfavourable to their posterity, have existed, and do exist, even where the best influences, in other most important respects, have been in operation: if this was the case, even in the apostolic time; and still remains to be the case, on every recurrence of like circumstances; what would be our ground to



hope for better things, on the supposition of, even, another Pentecost? To this serious question, I think I see a satisfactory answer, in the slow, but sure progress, of another providential scheme; a scheme, as profoundly adapted to extended and lasting effects, as the converting energy of Divine Grace, has been adapted to personal transformation; a scheme, one and continuous, while converting movements have been numerous and short-lived; a scheme, lastly, which, from being one and continuous, can be expected to evolve gradually; only to keep pace with the advance of society; and, then only, to manifest its perfect operation, when things, in general, shall be ripe for it, and the great prophetic season shall have arrived; while nothing of this kind could be supposed, in the various instances, in which the converting influence has manifested itself; the effect, here, requiring a like operation, in the first instance, as in the last.

In a word, reason, experience, and Holy Scripture, seem, to my apprehension, to put it past all doubt, by their united testimony, that the system of national establishments,—which commenced at the time of Constantine, and has been, providentially, maintained, through various revolutions of civil and political society, to the present hour,—is, in spite of all its imperfections, that very growing scheme, by means of which will be finally accomplished, that general, and lasting renovation, of human society, which we are so strongly warranted to expect; but which, neither reason, nor experience would justify our expecting from the most powerful movement, in the way of mere personal conversion. That the great apparatus I speak of, does not, as yet, appear to avouch fully, what I ascribe, is, as I have just said, what must be reckoned on, during the less perfect

stages of the progress. The first colouring of the finest picture, shows nothing, to common eyes, of what it is to be eventually. If the apparent secularisation of, even, the best national churches, would seem to contradict what I suppose, it is answered, that this is no more than was predicted. What, in reality, but this, is the treading down of the Holy City by the Gentiles, for forty and two months? But, be it well observed, that, desolate as it is, it is the Holy City still, in spite of all its ruinous heaps. Even this single passage of the Revelation, wonderfully supports the idea I am now maintaining. For, where, or in what instance, is there a continued treading down of the Church, answering, in its duration, to any notion of the period of 1260 years, but in the precise case of national establishments? All of these, that have any thing in them to invite the waster, are wasted; that is, perverted: and yet, abused as they have been, the eye of heaven seems, still, to watch over them; and to put limits to desolation itself. The Church, in its unestablished form, (which so many honest persons suppose its only true form,) affords nothing to throw light on this prophecy. It is not trodden down, in any fair sense of the term; but, least of all, continuously. Its members, too often, become men of the world; but, men of the world do not desolate it, in the prophetic sense. They may persecute it, and drive it into the wilderness; but they come not within its precincts; least of all is it delivered to them, as the Holy City is. In truth, the unestablished form of the Church has its own prophecy; that of the Woman, sheltered and fed in the wilderness; to which its real case agrees, in every thing; but to the prophecy respecting the Holy City, as I conceive, in nothing. The two prophecies

are, in themselves, so dissimilar, as to require two distinct significations ; and nothing can furnish these more accurately, than the distinct circumstances of the visible Church, as established, and as unestablished. I only wonder, that those, who now study the Apocalypse, should think of any other interpretation.

In the mean time, does he, who shelters and feeds the woman, in the wilderness, take no care, of a kind correspondent to this, for the Holy City ? If we hearken to the word of prophecy, he does. He preserves the measured temple, and them that worship therein, uninjured and untouched, though in the very midst of the desolations ; that is, as I conceive, he so orders events, that, even in the most corrupt times, and portions of the Church, he is never left without living witnesses, uninterruptedly, and in the midst of popery itself. We see a series of the brightest luminaries, teaching, and exemplifying, the sublimest and most spiritual piety ; we see them, even in the highest stations of the Church ; — Abbots, Bishops, Archbishops, Cardinals. It would be easy to produce names, — Bernard, Guigo, Borromæus, Neri, Bona, De Sales, &c. ; — whose rank, as it put their piety to the severest test, made it also proportionably conspicuous ; and gave lasting force and lustre, to their writings, and the records of their lives. In our own national Church, as it departed least — that is, in necessary things only — from the unreformed Church, so, most certainly, in it, the same kind of series of individual luminaries, has most remarkably distinguished it. Here, I get on ground already touched upon ; but I am led to it by the subject. I have already observed, in my long letter, that this series, taken in general, in all its variety of outward circum-

stances, identifies, most strictly, with Mr. Wesley's teachers of sanctification ; that is, as it should seem, the piety preserved in the Church, in its established form, exactly supplies the remarkable defect of the piety, which has prevailed in its unestablished form ; the latter being scarcely more zealous, for the energy of converting grace, than the former, for the maturity of holiness ; and, most certainly, the one not more deficient, in what respects the superstructure, than the others have been, in what concerns the foundation. Each, in fact, fails as much in the work of the other, as he excels in his own work ; and thus, as I imagine, they have gone on, severally, promoting a final great result ; and, in the mean time, surprisingly verifying what the Revelation says, of two witnesses, who were to go on prophesying in sackcloth ; that is, equally lamenting the prevalence of sin, and, with equal sincerity, testifying against it, during the whole course of the disastrous season.

This brings me round, fully, to the point I began with ; the fact of the best sermons in our Church, not having turned any number of sinners, from the error of their ways. I say, then, that on the grounds I have laid down, this does not appear to have been the specific work of its best teachers. That work was otherwise provided for ; and the plan has, clearly, not failed in that which was intended. But other work was necessary ; and, we may believe, very different training for the workmen, as well as different means of working. I have spoken of this, elsewhere ; and will only observe, here, how remarkably that one practice, which the writer in the Magazine arraigns, accords (if we may trust Mr. Wesley's judgment) with the special purpose to which these workmen are, providentially, designated.

You see, I maintain no rivalry : I suppose two great, and, as the world has yet been, equally necessary, objects ; and, I do not see them both, in any one single case, as yet, adequately provided for ; but, on closer examination, I perceive, they are surprisingly provided for, distinctly, in a way which human thought never could have devised, since, to this hour, it has, in the main, escaped human attention ; but which, notwithstanding, in a wonderful manner, seems to correspond almost to the very letter, as well as spirit, of prophecy.

I grant, that, in the higher department, the labourers, and even the examples, are, as yet, very few ; but, few as they have been, they have answered a great end, and borne a powerful testimony. Besides, in this department the great difficulties have lain : the great obstacles to be surmounted are here : it is for the fulness of time, here, that the whole work waits. Our Redeemer's kingdom triumphed over the pain, and poverty, with ease. The field, here, has been thronged with combatants ; and their victory has been complete, and uniform. But, our Lord's own statement of the opposite kind of contest, (I mean, with the wealth and honours of the world,) that " it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle," &c. ; (yet, he adds, that, with God, it is possible ; for, with him, nothing shall be impossible :) this statement, I say, must, at length, be fully demonstrated : God's honour demands this ; it being the express design of the whole scheme, that, " by means of the Church, might be shown to the principalities and powers, the manifold wisdom of God ;" which, then only, will be done, when that wisdom is shown to be equal to every thing, and that, sooner or later, all must become subordinate to it. It is, also,

needful, in order to the great end being accomplished ; for, if the world was not to be first conquered by piety, piety must, infallibly, be conquered by the world. The victory of faith, therefore, must be accomplished over prosperity, as really as it has ever been over adversity ; else “ the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven ” could not be given to “ the people of the saints of the Most High,” without extreme danger, or infallible certainty, of their soon ceasing to be saints. To suppose this difficulty removed, by mere Omnipotence, would be, to suppose the triumph of the Gospel, not achieved by itself, but by some new, and distinct energy ; and, it would be to suppose, what might as well be done now, and, consequently, what might have been done at first. We must, therefore, in all reason and consistency, look forward to Christianity itself, instrumentally effecting its own triumph, by the advancing influence, and final ascendancy, of its principles and powers. Other methods might illustrate God’s power ; but, “ Wisdom,” the attribute to be here illustrated, can be displayed, only by what was first devised, proving eventually successful.

I expand, without intending it. This is a subject as extensive as it is deep, and would require a volume to do it justice. I can but give hints ; but, I hope, these hints, in connection with former hints, will be intelligible. I come, therefore, to this point : — there is a great, efficacious, influence to be exercised, not on individuals, merely, in order to their conversion, but on the world, in order to the poison being expelled from it, and the evil, even of its most seductive objects, being subdued, and transmuted. In those movements of Divine wisdom and goodness, which have been most effica-

cious, in effecting individual changes, I see nothing adequate to, nothing giving the slightest prognostic of, any such general change. On the contrary, I see, that those movements, necessary and beneficial as they are, can (as it appears) be carried on, only while the seductions of the world are kept aloof. They cannot be the destined consequences of that, the very contact with which has ever proved fatal to them.

But, I do see, or, at least, think I see, elsewhere, what affords a more hopeful prospect. I see an organisation so constructed, as strictly to correspond to the hoped-for result ; and, in the vitalised part of that organisation, I clearly perceive a fair pledge, and earnest, of that result. I see, in the entire object, an apparatus amazingly fitted to act upon the world ; and, in the specimens of its effect, as yet producible, I rejoice to behold demonstrative, matter-of-fact proof, that there is nothing in this world, which can imply a lasting obstacle to the progress, and final supremacy, of our Redeemer's kingdom. In a word, I see, in that part of the great plan, which I now have in view, such a method of forming an alliance, between what is harmless, and, yet, pleasant, in the world, with what is purely religious ; and of gradually accustoming the mind to live in the world, without being of it ; that I cannot but admire the depth of the contrivance ; and rest with confidence, — the confidence of reason, not less than of faith, — in the final, and consummate, issue.

Here, I cannot expect to convince you, by brief remarks ; and the occasion does not allow of enlargement. I will, therefore, limit myself to the mention of one or two particulars, tending to elucidate what I suppose true. I have adverted to two

objects, to the attainment of which, I have expressed my persuasion, that the methods of those who pursue the conversion of individuals, as their great point, are, generally speaking, inadequate ; while, I have ventured to maintain, that, in these special instances, aids are provided, by Divine Providence, in such an establishment as ours, not elsewhere to be met with.

As to the probable truth of my supposition, respecting the first object, namely, maturity in piety, or going onward toward perfection, I would, again, refer to Mr. Wesley's remarkable observation, that reading a pious book, was the best method of preaching, for instruction in righteousness. If this be truth, there must be some general principle, on which it rests ; something, in this mode of teaching, which gives it superior efficacy.— Can it be any thing else, than its calmness, and solidity ? But, if so, the same qualities, in other external aids of a spiritual nature, must be equally conducive to the same purposes. Consequently, they who would wish to grow in the knowledge of God, and to become rooted and grounded in love, ought, principally, to read such books, to use such private, and join in such public, devotions, as are calm and solid. I conceive, this is a strictly fair inference ; or, rather, it follows, of itself, from Mr. Wesley's position. But, if it be, what more beneficial, outward means of advancement could persons, in such a stage of the spiritual life, resort to, than a public service, like that of our Establishment ? It would seem, that exactly the same grounds, which warranted the saying, that reading a wise, and pious book to a congregation, was the best method of instructing them in righteousness, — that is, of



deepening their spiritual wisdom, and giving establishment to their minds,—would, no less, warrant the asserting, that the close, and cordial joining in the solemn services of the Established Church of England, was the method of public, or joint, devotion, best fitted to the same purpose. This, I own, could not be assumed, if the matter of those services was not what it is, namely, the concentrated essence of, not only vital, but perfect, inward piety. But, this being so exquisitely the fact, does not Mr. Wesley's principle apply to the steady, and constant joining in these, as much as it can do to any imaginable means of improvement? (the Word of God, itself, read and meditated on, with like calmness and solidity, and private prayer, used in a similarly settled, and deep manner, alone excepted.) What, then, can be plainer, allowing the first principle,—that, whatever may be true of other national establishments, ours is, providentially, adapted, in an eminent degree, to promote the religious maturity of those, who rightly avail themselves of it; that its admirable formularies are the more fitted to such a purpose, by having their transcendent matter wholly unmingled with stimulancy; and that, thus, on the whole, there is invaluable provision, here, for the very object, in which the most distinguished instruments of turning sinners from the error of their ways, have so signally, and, almost, so uniformly, failed?

“As to those parts of worship,” says Mr. John Howe, “which are of most frequent use in our assemblies, (whether conforming, or non-conforming,) prayer, and preaching, and hearing of God's Word; one sort do more savour prayer, by a foreknown form, another [sort], that which hath more of

surprise, by a grateful variety of unexpected expressions." And, shortly after, he observes, "that he had not met with any that appeared, to him, to live in more entire communion with God, in higher admiration of him, in a pleasanter sense of his love, more humble, fruitful, lives on earth, or, in a more joyful expectation of eternal life, than some that have been wont, with great delight, publicly, to worship God, in the use of the Common Prayer." "But, then," he tells us, "he has known others, as highly excelling in the same respects, that could by no means relish it; but have always counted it insipid, and nauseous. The like," he adds, "may be said of relishing, or disrelishing, sermons, preached in a digested set of words, or, with a more flowing freedom of speech."

In stating these differences of liking, it was Mr. Howe's object, to impress the notion, that all this was resolvable into mere variety of mental taste; and, it must be allowed, that, in a non-conformist, of the seventeenth century, both this supposition, and the impartial evidence, which he brings to support it, implied something very noble. But, wise and ingenious as Mr. Howe, most assuredly, was, can we avoid questioning, whether his candour, in these remarks, was not greater than his accuracy? Is it not nearly self-evident, that he, who habitually relishes the same devotional form, so as to feel undiminished fervour of heart, in the five-hundredth repetition of it, gives a solider proof of spiritual health, and of maturity of piety, than he, who seeks the excitement of surprise, in a variety of unexpected expressions? If we see one man, dining with apparent relish, on the same simple food, that he has eaten of some thousand times before,

and another dissatisfied, except he has continual variety ; still more, if we observe the one, systematically preferring what is plain, provided, only, it be nutritious, and the other, deeming the most nutritious food insipid, and nauseous, except it be highly seasoned, and made stimulating to the palate, shall we be likely to regard this, only as a difference of natural taste ? Will not our inference be, that the appetite, and palate, of the one, are exactly as they ought to be ; and that, in the other, they are grossly vitiated ? I think, we could not help coming to this conclusion, in the natural fact ; and, on Mr. Howe's own fair statement, the analogy seems inevitable. I should not wish, however, to press it with any undue severity. Candid allowance is to be made for rooted prejudices ; which, we know, may exist in, otherwise, excellent persons : but, may it not be said, that prejudice may be on the one side, as well as on the other ? I conceive, not in the same manner, nor with the same likelihood. He, who dislikes what he has never made fair trial of, is, in the strictest sense, a prejudiced person : the character, precisely, to which all mankind awards that epithet. He, on the other hand, who likes, after full trial, may, by possibility, be prejudiced, — a defect of mind may mislead him ; — but this would not account for the continued liking of numbers of the most intelligent ; and, still less, for that healthiness of soul, in general, and that devotional delight, in particular, to which Mr. Howe so liberally bears witness.

Let, then, the whole of Mr. Howe's statement be soberly weighed : and let it be seen, whether we can avoid admitting, that the one of his two cases, self-evidently implies mental health ; and, that the

other gives the idea of something very like mental disease: or that, at least, we seem to see a stability, like that of full age, in the one; and some of the marks of moral childishness, in the other. I only say, let the facts be suffered to speak for themselves; and, then, let it be shown, how this result is to be escaped. But, if this must be granted, to what practical conclusion, do these inductions, united with Mr. Wesley's above-quoted testimony, bring us? Is it not to this, — that, as he, who would conquer a weakness, must not, unnecessarily, indulge it; and, as he, who would acquire soundness of habit, must, even forcibly, accustom himself to what belongs to that habit; so he, who would acquire mental health, and mental growth, must adopt a suitable mental regimen; must, in every thing that concerns himself, exclusively prefer, and habituate himself to, that nourishment, which is plain, as well as wholesome; which, instead of creating a false appetite, puts the soundness of appetite, continually, to the test; and, at the same time, must be strictly cautious, as to what may counteract this better, and safer, habit: not, certainly, by omitting what has been of use to himself, heretofore, and what he may still be providentially called to, for the sake of others; but, by making both the sobriety of his own mind, at all times, and the due, and steady intermixture of more solid matter, at every proper season, a corrective of what, in the other acts, tends to ferment and fluctuation.

If there be no reason, no consistency, in these remarks, with all my heart, I say, let them fall by their own weight; but, if the premises are obvious, and the conclusions rational, then, do they not deserve the deepest attention? We know, from Scrip-

ture, — we see, from experience, — that there is a possibility of persons continuing “in Christ,” as St. Paul expresses it, and, yet, being but babes in him. We see it is, indeed, the commonest of all cases; as if, even at this day, the inward, and spiritual Church were, apparently, but a great nursery; where milk is the only aliment, and strong meat almost wholly unknown. It is, surely, time, to enquire, at least, whether there be not a more excellent way — some surer method — of becoming “rooted and grounded in love,” than has yet come into common practice? My remarks aim at supplying this defect: I ask nothing for them, but dispassionate examination.

But, I wish to say something on the remaining point; it being equally my persuasion, that the established form of Christianity befriends the education of children, as that it aids the advancement of the serious adult. I must repeat, that my remarks extend only to such an establishment as ours; where reason is not shocked, on the one hand, as in the Church of Rome; nor, on the other hand, imagination neglected, as it has, comparatively, rather systematically been, in all the other Protestant Churches, as far as I know their present circumstances. Were I to look beyond our establishment, for efficiency in the matter in question, I conceive the Church of Rome, with all its excesses, would, in virtue of what it does possess, put in the next claim; it having all the means of acting on youth that we have, only with the counteracting accompaniments, from which we are, happily, free. Still, even in our Church, I dwell on what I see, far less for the sake of what it now accomplishes, than for that which its providential structure implies it to be

fitted for, — and individual instances, even already, demonstrate to be fully within reasonable calculation, — were more favourable circumstances to take place in society.

But, at all events, I do not mean, that the Church itself is to be the educator. I suppose — what is, evidently, yet a rare case — parents, who, themselves, know the worth of our establishment ; who fully understand its nature, and have imbibed its spirit ; making the use of it, in educating their children, that it seems intended for. This is simply the case I imagine ; and, were it once fully exemplified, I have no doubt but it would speak for itself. I suppose no bigotry in the parents : I suppose them acquainted with the providential worth of unestablished, as well as of established, bodies ; and, not to have overlooked the good to be derived from the former, in their settled adherence to the latter. In parents of this character, I conceive, I should see the most adequate trainers of childhood and youth, which have yet been in the world ; for, in my judgment, they would have much of nature to aid them, as well as of grace. In adult conversions, nature has, already, taken the wrong side, and must be subdued ; its members have been so misemployed, as to be nearly incapable of serving a good purpose ; they must, therefore, be mortified, — spiritually cut off. But, in the yet unsoiled, and flexible, season of youth, the great object is, not to subdue, but, to attract, and pre-occupy. Imagination, being now all alive, and, yet, wholly unperverted, only let fit means be used, and it may receive such impressions of the sweetness, and sublimity, of true piety, as it shall never part with. The heart is now at its height of tenderness and susceptibility ; but it is neither through the passions, nor the reason,

that it is accessible. The passions would imply a violence, and reason, a stillness, equally uncongenial. It is fancy that reigns ; and, thoroughly to engage this mainspring of the soul, on the side of goodness, is the point indicated by all the movements of nature.

The danger of the world taking the earliest, and deepest, possession, is felt by all ; but, it is not generally, if almost at all, considered, that this attachment, in the first stage of it, is seated in our natural tastes, far more than in our depraved propensities. The world holds out, in the first instance, objects of a pure, and innocent, love. The opening mind delights in what is brilliant, impressive, animated. The new, the beautiful, the majestic, enchant it, in their turns : it thrills, and vibrates, to every touch of visionary pleasure ; and, to look abroad, is to meet the means of excitement. I repeat, this is not sin. It soon, deplorably soon, in most cases, becomes sin ; but, in itself, it is nature ; the instinct of the young mind, as much as lively motion, is of the young body. But, why do these feelings, so speedily, become the wheels, and springs, of moral evil ? I say, not, merely, because human nature is depraved ; for, if this could not be counteracted, by proper means, Timothy never would have been what he was, from a child ; and St. Paul's exhortation to parents would have been vain. But, the true cause is, that religion is so seldom offered to the young mind, in a form suitable to these ruling tastes ; and, on the contrary, so often pressed upon it, in a form directly opposed to them. Adaptation of religion, to the natural feelings of youth, is, in general, so far from being thought of, that, what is deemed the religious world, almost universally rejects the very principle. Their whole system, is a professed combat with

nature; efficient methods of conciliating it, are, of course, out of the question.

And yet, in this very instance, there is a curious inconsistency. While all this is, as much as ever, held in theory, we see it, in numberless instances, as if stealthily departed from in practice. While the doctrines are as dismal, and the devotion as dreary as ever, the house of worship begins to grow elegant, and the music to be elaborate. It is not necessary to say, that I apply this, to those only, to whom it belongs. But, I conceive, it does apply, more or less, to all the Calvinist congregations of the present day; and, in a certain degree, to all congregations of wealthy separatists. But, is this awakened wisdom? Is it not, much rather, progressive self-indulgence; adulteration, much more than adaptation? I speak plainly; but, do I speak untruly? "Those," says Mrs. Barbauld, "who, a little before, betrayed, perhaps, an aversion from having any thing in common with the Church, now affect to come as near it as possible. They aim at elegance and show, in their places of worship, the appearance of their preachers, &c. ; and, thus, impolitically awaken a taste, it is impossible they should ever gratify."

These last, are emphatic words; and, the quarter from which they come, gives them the utmost degree of force. Mrs. Barbauld, I conceive, errs only in supposing, that such a taste could, by any possible means, be kept asleep. The wish for those supposed improvements, will be the infallible consequence of increased wealth, and multiplied domestic comforts. They, who become accustomed to what is handsome, and commodious, in their own houses, will not fail to look for things of the same character, in their place of worship; and though, some of the older, and most



of the poorer, brethren, may cleave to the old simplicity, their remonstrances will not avail long; riches being as sure to turn the scale, in the little ecclesiastical republic, as in the open, and promiscuous world.

But, though the embellishments, thus introduced, may gratify the heads of the congregation, they will not be likely to prolong the influence of the system. The children of sectaries may, doubtless, be won, by the piety of their fathers; though, how rarely does even this take place, without some abatement of fervour, or relaxation of strictness? But, in no instance, I conceive, are they attached, by the introduction of luxurious refinements. The innovaters may hide from themselves the inconsistency, between the plan on which they set out, and the subsequent measures which they adopt; but the instincts of young minds will soon make the discovery. They will feel the incongruity of secular embellishments with sectarian severity; and will, too probably, be confirmed in their natural attachment to the former, and no less natural aversion to the latter. A fatal disregard of religion itself, (whose true character it is scarcely possible for them to catch,) is too likely to be the issue.

But, it may be asked, why should not the avowed secularities of an establishment, be equally unfriendly to the religious principles of its younger members? To this, the answer is easy: the union between religious, and secular, objects, in the one case, is perfectly different from what it is in the other. In the sect, every thing secular had been systematically renounced; the unmixed simplicity of religion, was the principle exclusively adopted: to depart, therefore, in any instance, from this original ground, is to vitiate the entire system; it is to make alliance with an enemy, against whom the party had vowed

eternal war. In the Establishment, on the contrary, all is consistent. The entire constitution may be erroneous; but, there is no dissonance between the whole and its parts, or, between former and present arrangements. The avowed intention has been the same at all times; not only to maintain truth and piety, as revealed and exemplified in the sacred volume, but, by apt means, to impress the senses and engage the imagination. Grandeur and beauty, cheerfulness and pleasure, are, consequently, no innovations here. They are the deliberately chosen means, the original adjuncts and auxiliaries. The opening mind, therefore, finds, at least, nothing to shock or revolt it. The system is meant to be attractive; and it does not fail of its end. In proportion as young minds are impressible and elevated, capacious and pure, exactly in the same proportion, do they feel, toward the Establishment, the warmth of affection, the solidity of esteem, and the depth of veneration.

That these effects are not, generally, lasting, implies a charge, not against the system, but against the present state of society. Who, that observes mankind, as it yet presents itself, could expect that results, at once deep, noble, and pure, should be anywhere extensive? It is, therefore, most cordially allowed, that, in the present state of human nature, what could be accomplished, by the means in question, would be far from sufficient to answer God's benignant purposes in the world. It is remembered, also, that the things referred to are but external means, dependent, for actual efficiency, on the accompanying influences of grace; and it is, farther, conceded, that, hitherto, those influences have much more signally appeared to attend the movements of

pious sects, than the best fitted apparatus, in the most purified Establishment. In a word, it is felt, as has been already remarked, that, as yet, establishments could no more be efficacious without sects, than sects could ensure lasting good without establishments ; and that properties now distinct, must be united in the more permanent system, before it can be relied upon alone. Granting, however, all this, abundant specimens are, at all times, producible ; serving, unequivocally, to exemplify the high destiny of such an establishment as ours ; and to illustrate the happy consequences which are to be reckoned on, when there shall be an adequate disposition to make use of the aids which it affords.

Let us, then, candidly examine the impression, which a young mind, under fair circumstances, is likely to receive from our Establishment. It sees religion associated with its own most natural pleasures ; with objects which amuse it, and with sounds which delight it. Its earliest conception, therefore, of the service of God, implies animation and enlargement. It cannot think of divine worship, without picturing to itself what is most graceful and dignified. It sees earthly grandeur, doing homage in the sanctuary of God ; and, thus, even its most dangerous tendencies become impregnated with that feeling, which is their only adequate corrective. Such, I conceive, are the ideas, which children of any capacity cannot but form, on being first introduced into such churches, as do justice to their great object ; and it must either be shown, that these impressions give a substantially false notion of religion, or, it must be granted, that they are highly friendly to its eventual influence ; for, that they are fitted to take the deepest hold of human nature, is self-evident. If, therefore, they do

not lead it to a wrong object, the right one is sure to be served by them. Their power is too great, to admit of their neutrality.

But these, as I have observed, are the mere first impressions. When attention is rightly directed, much more distinct, as well as more important, ideas will be formed; ideas, deeper as to moral effect, and, yet, no less congenial to the vivid susceptibilities of nature.

There are two opposite properties, which meet in the public service of the Establishment; and which, I conceive, fit it peculiarly for acting on the minds of children: these are, sameness and variety. The child hears the same service, as to form and method, and, in a great degree, as to substance; and, notwithstanding, the service itself is so divided into parts, and so varied in its circumstances, as to imply the aptest possible provision against irksomeness. A number of short prayers, diversified with responses, must, in the nature of things, be less tiresome to a young mind, than one long-continued prayer; and a farther relief will arise, from frequent change of posture in the congregation, as well as from occasional change of place in the minister. I may be told, that these are little things. In themselves, they may be so; but he knows little of human nature, who is not aware of the possible importance, of apparently little things. Who does not know, that love of variety, and impatience of monotony, are amongst the first, and strongest dispositions of the infant mind? And what could we imagine more unfortunate, than, that these tendencies of nature should be overlooked, in that particular instance, where, to gain the heart, is to insure happiness, for time and for eternity?

But, the constant repetition of the same service, answers a no less valuable end. It serves to impress upon the memory, at that time when it is most receptive, the clearest, most compendious, and best methodised lessons of Christian piety, that have ever yet been formed in mere human language. I am perfectly assured, that, in thus speaking, I do not yield to any prejudice. Let the morning collect, "O Lord, our heavenly Father," &c., and the evening collect, "O God, from whom all holy desires," &c., be only attentively considered; and, then, let it be shown, where, in any other instance, that "way of life, which is above to the wise," is more briefly, more fully, or, more engagingly represented. Catechetical instruction may, in its place, be good; but, at once, to teach truth, and duty, and wisdom, and happiness, in such portable forms of devotion, seems to be one of the best methods of forming the young mind. The only stated formulary, which our blessed Lord taught his disciples, was a short prayer, in which the most copious matter is compressed into the fewest words. On that occasion, he expressly said, "When ye pray, say;" but his direction, elsewhere, is, "After this manner, pray ye." This was a sanction for other formularies; but, with the clearest injunction, to form them by the model he was then furnishing. I would ask, where has this been so exactly done, as in the short formularies of the Church? What other prayers so accurately follow the plan of the Lord's Prayer, as these? And, therefore, I do not hesitate to add, what other devotional forms, where obviously the same brevity, the same compendiousness, the same felicity of method, is not observed,—can be equally fitted to that nature of man, which our omniscient teacher ever kept in view; and, still more, to that infantine

state, for which, we know, he was peculiarly solicitous to make the most suitable provision?

But the highest excellency of the various short formularies of the Church, and that which, above all their other qualities, fits them for the mind of childhood, is their exquisite hilarity. The great point in which they all meet is, "that sweet peace, which goodness bosoms ever." In them, piety is not a low, struggling, self-lamenting course; it is, on the contrary, strength, safety, unbroken tranquillity, anticipated heaven. It is, what human nature itself cannot hear of, without desiring after; and what, I verily believe, it does in an intelligent, and yet unstained mind, uniformly feel the sweetness of, so as often, in future life, to look back to those bright dawns, with a regret, better felt than understood. I do not mean to say, that these sensations are never experienced elsewhere. I have no doubt, but they would be felt by individuals, wherever such worthy persons as Doddridge, Samuel Pearce, or Cornelius Winter, have spoken from the fulness of their hearts. But, even these men did not always "mount up on wings, as eagles." And, are there not many,—rather, are they not the most,—whose lengthened confessions of depravity and disobedience, and whose low and languid common-places of devotion, and mere formal solemnity, cannot be expected to kindle, in any young mind, one ray of light, or one glowing sensation?<sup>1</sup> This, then, which is so precariously, if not so rarely done, in other places, our prayers are fitted to do, unde-

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<sup>1</sup> If I should be thought too severe, I appeal to a testimony, given in a note annexed to Dr. Rippon's Funeral Oration on Abraham Booth; where he states a pious, well-informed American to have said, that, in England, he had heard several ministers preach; but that he had heard one minister pray.

viatingly ; were they accompanied only with those co-operative aids, which, doubtless, Divine Providence had in view : I mean, a pious care, and capacity, in parents, to direct the attention of their children to the different parts of divine worship ; and to rivet in their minds, by powerful, yet insinuating, instruction, what they observe, from time to time, to take hold of their feelings.

The effect, which I am reckoning upon, is little less likely to be produced, by other parts of our worship. The sacred songs, which are selected from various parts of Scripture, (amongst which has been placed, by ancient usage, and, surely, not undeservedly, the song of St. Ambrose, " We praise thee, O God," &c.), are admirably adapted to young imaginations. But nothing, perhaps, serves a nobler purpose, in this respect, than the regularly reading, at each morning, and evening, service, a portion of the Psalms. " The main subjects of these sweet songs," says the wise, and pious Jonathan Edwards, " are the glorious things of the Gospel ; as is evident, by the interpretation that is often put upon them, and the use that is made of them, in the New Testament ; no one book, of the Old Testament, being so often quoted, in the New, as the Book of Psalms. It was used, in the Church of Israel, by God's appointment. So, David is called the sweet Psalmist of Israel, because he penned Psalms, for the use of the Church of Israel. Accordingly, we have an account (2 Chron. xxix. 30.) of their being so used, ages after David was dead. We find, also, that they are appointed, in the New Testament, to be made use of in the Christian Church, in their worship, ' speaking to yourselves in Psalms,' &c. (Eph. v. 19.) ; and they have been, and, to the end of the world, will be,

made use of in the Church, to celebrate the praises of God."

Can any thing be more just, than these sentiments? And, yet, in what instance have they, for ages, been acted on, but in Established Churches? I might, on good grounds, add, in what church have they been fully carried into practice, but in our own? For, be it observed, that poetical versifications, or, things meant to be such, are not the Psalms. Divine wisdom has given to these songs of Zion, not merely their matter, but their structure; and has so united the former with the latter, as to make it impossible to convey the one, without strictly retaining the other. The poetry of the Psalms, is a poetry, not of words, but of thoughts. It consists in an exquisitely artificial connection, not of sound with sound, or of syllable with syllable, but of one idea with another. Let any other poetry be translated, verbatim; and the poetical character, as consisting in the measure and cadence of the original words, is forthwith lost. Hebrew poetry, on the contrary, can be preserved only by the most exactly literal translation: you destroy its peculiar character just as much, by turning it into measured verse, as you destroy the character of Greek, or Latin poetry, by turning it into simple prose. On this plain principle, then, I say, that the Psalms are then only made use of, where they are recited in the form, in which we have them in our Bibles, or in our Common Prayer-Books. Any intelligent English reader may judge of this for himself, by comparing either of the translations now referred to, with any poetical version whatever. He must, at once, see, that no human ingenuity could give, to a rythmical version, that accuracy of



arrangement, that luminousness of meaning, that beautiful adjustment of one member of a sentence to another, that unstudied dignity, and unlaboured magnificence, which continually present themselves in the literal translation. This is so obvious a fact, as to make it appear wonderful, that it has not been adverted to. The more so, as one of the great purposes of Divine wisdom, in adopting this peculiar species of poetry, appears to have been, that it might not lose its poetical form, in passing from one language to another ; but that, by a simple rendering of word for word, its treasures might be shared, and its excellence enjoyed, by every age, and by every nation.

I should stray too widely from my main subject, were I to enlarge on the elaborateness of error, to which the overlooking so plain a matter has given rise. No kind of censure would be meant against those, who, by way of edifying amusement, and for the sake of variety, have given new forms to the substance of those sacred compositions. Multiplied imitations can do no hurt, provided they do not supplant the original. But, I conceive, this very supplantation, has been singularly the fate of the Book of Psalms ; and, in no instance more flagrantly, than when the worthy, but, in this instance, I must think, much mistaken, Dr. Watts, undertook to give them, what he called, an evangelical dress. Were they not, already, what the skill of Heaven had made them ? and, being, of all other parts of the Old Testament, the most extensively, and sublimely prophetical ; and referring, in every part of them, not only to what has taken place but to what is yet to be accomplished ; who, on earth, nay, what angel from heaven, had a right to strip them of

their divinely significant drapery; and send them forth into the world, clothed in the narrow notions, and yet narrower language, of short-sighted man? The only other portion of the ancient Scriptures which, in prophetic importance, could be compared to them, would be the Prophecy of Isaiah; and, perhaps, even this (as might, possibly, be shown), but to a certain extent, and in a certain measure; yet, how strange would it be thought, to introduce a modernised imitation of this seraphic bard,—made for the professed purpose of assimilating his language to that of St. Paul, in order that it might be substituted, on all public occasions, in the room of the holy prophet's own inimitable effusions?

That thoughts, exactly like these, occurred to our wise reformers, is more than I should venture to suppose; but, whatever were their reasonings, they have, signally, met the wish, to which such considerations lead. They have, in a peculiar degree, restored to the songs of Zion their ancient honours; and given them that place, to which, we may venture to say, they were divinely destined. That, amongst the ends of Heaven, in inspiring these matchless compositions, none stood higher than the forming of young minds; nay, that, in some sense, none stood so high,—may be inferred, from the decided bearing of the whole system, of which these songs made so eminent a part. The whole Mosaic institution, was a profoundly conceived, and exquisitely arranged, plan of education; and it is only by considering it in this light, that its true character can be understood, or its real excellence appreciated. It was for this end, that the tabernacle first, and, afterward, the temple, were con-

structed with so much magnificence and splendour : it was for this purpose, that the service of the sanctuary was made impressive on the outward senses ; and that the very girdles, and bonnets, of the priests, and, still more, the robes, and mitre, of the high-priest, were formed, as we are expressly told, “ for glory, and for beauty.” But, above all, it was for this purpose, that God, by the ministry of David, added the ordinance of divine psalmody, that it might be a sort of animating soul to the beautiful body, already constructed. It was, doubtless, nobly fitted for all : but the appropriate voice of this delightful institution, is, that of the Psalmist himself, “ Come, ye children, hearken unto me, and I will teach you the fear of the Lord.” Or, as it is elsewhere expressed, “ I will open my mouth in a parable ; I will utter dark sayings of old, to show, to the generation to come, the praises of the Lord, and his strength, and his wonderful works, that he hath done ; that the generation to come might know them, even the children that should be born, who should arise, and teach them to their children.” (Psalm lxxviii.)

I do not, as I have observed, by any means, limit the Psalms to this object ; but, that they are transcendently fitted to it, is seen, in every feature, and property of them. The views of God, of his majesty, his power, his omnipresence, his paternal goodness, which they everywhere display, at once convey lessons the most important, and present objects the most congenial, to a young mind. The beauty, and grandeur, of material nature, never, elsewhere, came together, in such rich variety, in such sweet simplicity, or, in such irresistible majesty. A single expression carries more instruction to the mind, and

takes a more powerful hold of the heart, than volumes of reasoning. God is, there, seen, as in a mirror, formed by himself; in a light, that familiarises, while it awes; and animates, while it informs. Piety is there seen, in its own truest nature, as the sublimest triumph, the solidest joy, the sweetest pleasure, the securest rest. There is no engaging character, which it does not possess; no delightful image, with which it is not associated. To read almost any single Psalm, with attention, and common taste, will be to feel what I say. To observe their effect on young minds, will be to understand much more, than any eulogy could express. They are, actually, themselves, as far as words and thoughts can be, the very green pastures, and still waters, which they describe; and the stated use of them, in the daily service, tends, as much as means can, to the accomplishment of their own lovely promise:—"They shall be satisfied with the plenteousness of thy house; and thou shalt give them to drink of thy pleasures, as out of the river."

I cannot, therefore, but repeat the observation, that the adopting of them, in the manner of our Church, (a manner, so directly corresponding to their divine purpose, and, so deeply justified, by the clear recollection, if not comfortable feeling, of every capable mind,) implies an advantage in the training of youth, not to be found, equally, in any other conceivable provision.

## LETTER TO JOSEPH BUTTERWORTH, Esq. UNFINISHED.

MY DEAR MR. B——.

THE enclosed packet was handed to me by Mr. Cooke, several days ago. If, therefore, it ought to have been sooner with you, I am the person in fault. The fact was, I wished to write to you ; and that induced me to detain the packet a day or two. I began to write ; but, as usual, my letter began to extend itself ; and now, finding it in vain to hope for an immediate finishing of it, I send the packet, determinately, this day, after an attempt to do so before, and after continued, and repeated interruption. The truth is, if I did not give myself a little time, in the morning, I should be able to do little, or nothing ; as, even at this time, when Dublin is emptiest, I meet such numerous avocations, by visits and incidental businesses, as would leave but a ragged account of the day, if it were not for the morning hour, and the domestic afternoon ; it being my practice, never to dine abroad : a rule, however, which I should be sorry to recommend, at least, in the same degree of strictness, to almost any body else.

I was glad, sincerely so I assure you, to hear, from Mr. Cooke, of your advancing recovery. I only hope you will let it be complete ; and not begin, too soon, to move about, in your customary way. It is good never to be precipitate ; nor to be impatient of confinement. I do not agree, by any means, with the mystics, that natural self, and its movements, are

as substantially to be put down by the grace of our Saviour, as carnal self, and its movements. But, I do certainly think, that discipline, and thorough breaking (as a horse is broken), are fully as essential, in the one instance, as expulsion and extirpation, in the other : and, therefore, as there may, really, be as much unsubdued wilfulness, in our own ways of doing good, as in another's ways of doing evil ; where the blessing of thorough instruction is afforded, one of the methods of it may be, to disable, wholly, for a time, from doing ; that the pupil may learn to be quiet, as well as active ; so that, when he comes to be active again, there may be more of the inner man, and less of the outward man, in his activity ; that, even in his common movements, he may become less the servant of accident, and more his own master, so as never to be unduly hurried, or run away with, by the object of the moment ; but to be ever above one's self, and, by that means, conqueror over every thing besides ; for, sure I am, He who reigns within, will never be vanquished by any thing external.

I believe this is an essential part of the meaning, of doing God's will on earth, as the angels do it in heaven ; for, though they do it ardently, they do it calmly. To lose their tranquillity, would be, to lose their heaven. In fact, calmness gives effect to ardour. The cherubim, in Ezekiel, "ran and returned, as the appearance of a flash of lightning ;"—yet, with all this rapidity, there was no perturbation : "they turned not when they went ; they went, every one, straight forward." In all their movements, there was nothing vertiginous ; and there was, also, the exactest harmony ; "their wings were joined one to another ;" that is, "their wings" were straight, the one toward the other." They kept

their position, without the slightest irregularity ; and, because they were thus exquisitely regular themselves, the attendant machinery of Providence as strictly kept time with them : — “ When the living creatures went, the wheels went ; when those stood, these stood ; and when those were lifted up from the earth, the wheels were lifted up over against them.” If I mistake not, there is sublime instruction in this intrinsically grand, and glorious representation.

But, even this falls far short of what we are elsewhere taught, on the self-same subject ; I mean, by the example of incarnate Deity. There is nothing more uniformly conspicuous, in our Redeemer, than his majestic composure. A glorious serenity, like that of the sun in the western heaven, marks his whole blessed and adorable course. Be the movement what it may ; whether he feeds thousands in the wilderness, or walks in Solomon’s Porch, like one who loved contemplative leisure, and liked to enjoy it, interchangeably, in perfect retirement, and in more frequented scenes ; still, he is the consummate contrast, the infinitely impressive, and engaging counter-example to that dissipation and distraction, which he so emphatically reproved in his friend Martha.

But this will not do : my long letter<sup>1</sup> will say enough, when you receive it ; this, therefore, shall be confined to passing occurrences. I have seen, and had some conversation with, your very good friend. I like him much better, than probably he will like me before we part. In the honesty of his heart, he is set, like the rest of them, on protestantising the native Irish. I did not hesitate to say,

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<sup>1</sup> September 3. 1808.

“Distribute Bibles to all that will take them ; there can be no great error in that ; but, beware how you whet the edge of a zeal, that is keen enough already ; the priests will be stimulated by hostility, and the event will shew, who are most likely to suffer from it.” The fact is, that proselytes to the Roman Catholic religion, are said to multiply. It may be ; for, in rousing the Roman Catholic clergy, to defend their own interest, we equally arm them, for attacking ours ; and they have it in their power, to carry the war into quarters, where, in the present circumstances of this scarcely emerging country, they can have little to counteract them.

I still, as firmly as ever, stick to my point, that there is, in all these matters, a much more profound mystery of Providence, than has yet, perhaps, entered fully into any human mind to conceive. I feel, as much as any temperate, well-informed Protestant can feel, the abstract desirableness of a better religion. No member of the reformed body values his special privileges more than I do ; but, most deliberately, do I deem it better, that the natives of this country should be, at this day, exactly what they are, than that they should be such dissenting Protestants, as I have seen before me in the North of Ireland ; or such episcopal Protestants, as we have seen in English Militia Regiments. If I am asked, Would you wish, then, that all were what your natives are ? I say, No. I am well aware of the value of Protestantism, and rejoice that it has extent and number enough, to secure its never going back. But, I conceive, Divine Providence adjusts different means, to different objects ; all which objects, again, are to serve the final establishment of his kingdom. Amongst the means that are now in operation, I consider, most



certainly, the mass of nations, here, still adhering to the Roman Catholic religion, to be one, — and, perhaps, a highly important one; I consider Great Britain of inconceivable importance to the world; I consider Ireland, as of vast importance to England; and I consider the extraordinary poise and balance of three great distinctions of religion here, as profoundly, and most influentially connected with the great scheme. I cannot explain myself, on such a point, in a letter which I mean to be very short; and, perhaps, repeated explanation would be little enough, to rescue me from the suspicion of extreme fancifulness. But, let me point your attention, to one obvious instance of utility, in the existing state of things. Is it not of great moment, that there should be an urgent necessity for the general notion of religion to be introduced, every now and then, into Parliament? It has no tendency, I grant, to cherish pious sentiment, directly; but, does it not tend to keep the room for it far more open, than if no importance whatever were publicly attributed to the subject? Let it be observed that, all that Christianity indispensably needs, in order to its making some way, at least, is, that it be not absolutely overlooked or neglected. That it should be spoken against, is no bad omen; but, that it should not be spoken of at all, is fatal. The point, then, is, to keep attention directed to it, by whatever means; and it will, to some hearts, at least, speak for itself. What was the great end of miracles, at the beginning, but to draw attention? It was, evidently, not to make converts; for, “if they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.” But, to a business of such noiseless commencement in itself, some accompanying means of

giving it notoriety was necessary ; and that means was, the power of working miracles ; but this, clearly, did no more than attract notice : For, says St. Paul of one kind, and, consequently, in effect, of the rest : “ Tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not.” That is, they were to bespeak attention, where, otherwise, it was not to be looked for. And, accordingly, having performed this preliminary part, they passed off, and returned no more.

But, Divine wisdom can accomplish the same end, by various means, according as there are various circumstances occurring in the course of the world. For eighty years past, it has pleased God to use new methods of evangelizing the less elevated classes of the English public ; and, most substantial have been the results. But, it is proved, by the event, that these means have not influenced the higher classes. Preaching, and devotional association, had no attraction for them. Was, however, nothing to be done, to keep them from sinking into the same dark abyss, into which their class has so generally sunk, in other countries ? Yes ; God has means, where man sees none. He who gave sight to a blind man, by putting clay upon his eyes, can still use gross means, for sublime purposes ; and, accordingly, as far as I can judge, from every appearance within my view, the continual debating about religion, which the differences in this island have occasioned, and must still occasion, until the question is finally set at rest, has done more, than, perhaps, could have been done, in any other way, to introduce a general idea of the importance of Christianity, into the minds of the generation now coming forward into life ; and, to dispose them to bear conversations, (and even be interested by them) which their

fathers treated (and, doubtless, without such a mode of engaging, they, too, would treat) with utter contempt and disgust.

I do not flatter myself, that such appearances are universal; but, I think I can assert their reality. It is, indeed, next to impossible, that ingenuous and intelligent minds, should not catch some spirit of enquiry, about a matter thus brought (even so obscurely, before them. All human beings, till trained to better things, are sensitive; but, being so, they may catch useful impressions this way, as well as pernicious ones. In fact, it must be thus, that they shall first get good impressions; and, accordingly, the best of blessings, the Gospel of Christ, has been made sensitive, as well as spiritual. Religion, therefore, must, some way or other, whenever it is to regain its power with any class, begin with impressing itself on the senses. It must embody itself in something, to be a medium of communication, between itself, and, as yet, unprepared minds. Was it, then, unworthy; rather, was it not most worthy, of the Divine wisdom, to reserve means, by which, at this most eventful time, the notion of religion might be, infallibly, forcibly, and continuously exhibited to the rising aristocracy of that country, which seems destined, at this day, to act the most distinguished part, in the present great drama of Providence? And, how this could have been effected equally, by other means, than those in actual operation, I acknowledge, I cannot conjecture. I believe, therefore, most seriously, that, so much of the Roman Catholic religion, as now exists here, was suffered to exist, solely that it might answer this, and, perhaps, still profounder, future purposes. I think so because its present strength is, so evidently, owing to events, which seem

to carry the impress of special Providence. The abstract unlikelihood, of so large a mass, of an opposite religion, having remained, for two centuries and an half, under a Protestant Church Establishment, is little less than self-evident.

If what I say appear far-fetched, let me make this plain observation : — Is it not obvious, that, in the present state of the British empire, and during such contests about religion, greater room is left for introducing the subject of religion, into companies, where, in any view, it could be desirable to introduce it, than could be conceived to exist, if all the inhabitants of the empire were Protestants? and, when introduced, could the subject be, in any other circumstances, so luminously discussed? variety, (in any thing,) affording room for a degree of elucidation which cannot be had, where there are no means of either comparing, or contrasting.

I could imagine inferences made from these remarks of mine, as if they tended to check even temperate reformation : but, I admit no such inferences to be just. Headlong attempts, as if our natives, and Hindoos, or Caffres, stood on the same ground, in religious matters, I would repress. But I would throw no obstacle, no chilling consideration, in the way, where the object was to make them, not proselytes, but Christians. They may be Christians, being Roman Catholics ; and, until they are Christians, I conceive them not competent to make a choice of a new religious profession.

I do not say, take no step whatever ; but, I say, whatever you do, do, on entire, and impartial view of all the good, as well as all the evil, that is now felt, or may be looked for. I think there is much to be done ; but, I must ever think, it can be done only

by acting upon all that is already right, amongst the Roman Catholics ; as St. Paul acted upon the little of rectitude, the mere shadow of a shade of truth, that he found amongst the Athenians. He viewed their devotions, before he attempted to reform their principles ; and though, in all he saw, he saw but one object which was not wretchedly wrong, he passed by the accumulated heaps of error, to make a gentle, and conciliatory use, of that solitary atom of a better element. You see, too, he had acquainted himself with what was good in their poets ; and seizes the opportunity of meeting them, on this common ground. Let the zealous Protestants of this day, act, only, toward their fellow-Christians, as St. Paul acted, in this celebrated instance, toward Pagans ; and we, at least, need not fear the consequences. If no good be done, no evil will be done. But a strict following such a plan, would do good ; for, on such a close examination of the existing case, such good would be found, to work upon, and work with, as, I humbly conceive, to make any wise Christian limit himself to that Catholic endeavour ; and, then, leave the rest to Divine Providence.

LETTER TO JOSEPH BUTTERWORTH, Esq., ON THE  
ADVANTAGES OF MENTAL CULTIVATION.

MY DEAR MR. BUTTERWORTH.

WITH this, I put into your hands a letter to your son ; which I have written, in consequence of a wish expressed by him, in a letter, some months ago. The date shews how early I attempted to meet his desire ; but the sickliest summer and autumn I have experienced for ten years, have forced me to delay finishing it, until now. I fear, it will not be what he looked for : the frequent interruptions were unfavourable to clearness, either of thinking, or writing.

As I am sure your son and you have no secrets from each other, I do not seal it. In fact, I wish you to read it, and to consider, maturely, some things in it : I think you will see, that I, at least, speak soberly, with respect to any improvement I wish him to aim at. What I suggest, in that way, is most deliberately stated : but I cannot hope that fruit will follow, if you do not see things in the same light ; and, at least, countenance my suggestions.

Far be it from me, to wish to divert your son, from his lawful and necessary business. But, most seriously do I add, far be the thought from you, of sacrificing his immortal mind, to this perishing world ; or of leading him so to devote himself to secular labours, as to leave him destitute of means for a useful, and happy employment of those hours of leisure, which, if he does not take care to secure to

himself through life, he never can look forward to either an easy decline, or a happy termination of it.

Should a thought come into your mind, that indulging an intellectual habit is dangerous to a man of business ; as, in addition to the time it occupies, (which might, perhaps, be spared,) it gives his mind a turn, which would raise it too high above the concerns of the counting-house. I say, such a fear would be founded, in any intellectual pursuit, where frothy matter was taken in, or a vain gratification aimed at ; but that intellectual habit, which has Divine truth for its matter, and establishment in wisdom and goodness for its end, has no tendency either to unsettle or puff up ; on the contrary, it will make that person wise and steady, in outward business, who would not be kept right by any other influence. A power of thinking, is, in itself, an excellent faculty ; the only difficulty is, that, when turned to one subject, it is not always easy to transfer it to another. But this is one of the high prerogatives of true religion, that, in what is exercised upon that, if only the exercise be what it should be, there is an easy transfer of the habit, thus gained, to every lawful object. I say this from experience : I assert, that, in consequence of my mind being settled by religious thought, I am ten times fitter, now, to attend, for myself or others, to any worldly business which presents itself, than I was when I was five-and-thirty.

I am impelled to offer these thoughts, by the strong conviction, that a wise application of the mind to religion, is as indispensable to *maturity* in goodness, as an affectionate attachment of heart is essential to *sincerity* in goodness. I appeal to your own experience, for the truth of this last ; that, however warmly men commence their religious career, after some

time, (it may be, after some years,) their pious ardour begins to subside, and a dulness, which they can rarely explain, and still more rarely resist, stealthily grows upon them, so that, except in seasons (which may still occur) of occasional excitement, they are not, as to religious feelings, the persons they once were. This change may, no doubt, be too often resolved into moral causes; such as voluntary neglect of secret duties, and of habitual watchfulness; and, also, to growing love of this present world, and that increase of personal self-indulgence, (I mean in matters of a less alarming nature,) which too frequently steals upon the successfully busy man. But, I conceive some degree of the change I speak of will occur, where it cannot be thus accounted for; and I suppose that it is little less than inevitable, from that subsidence of animal nature, which takes place at mid-life. While the blood flows briskly, feelings will be easily excited, whatever object the heart is set upon. But, when the noon of life is past, ardour as surely abates in the man, as it abates in the natural day; and the mind, from henceforward, in whatever pursuit, must owe that impulse to reflection, and to rationally apprehended motives, which it before received from sensation, and an attraction in the favourite object, that made thought comparatively unnecessary.

Is it not, then, a serious question, how may this movement of our nature be so managed, as to avert the danger which attends it? I see but one way;—to begin by times to learn religious wisdom, as well as to exercise religious affection; to study religion; its great and glorious ends; its present invaluable advantages, as well as everlasting prospects; its inward principles, by which alone its outward fruits can be secured; its universal, but



most beneficial, dominion over all the other concerns of life : and to do this, not speculatively, but with close self-application, as if it were (what, indeed, it infinitely is) our first and greatest business. To give the mind thus to religion, is, I conceive, the sole method of establishing the heart ; but the mind cannot thus be trained, except a portion of each day be allotted to the employment ; and, except that time (be it long, or short,) be wisely, as well as piously, occupied : I mean, in reading such books as Divine Providence has taken care to furnish us with, for this best and greatest of purposes. Much reading, even of this kind, I do not contend for : on the contrary, I greatly prefer frugal, but well-selected, reading, with accompanying, and subsequent, thought. In our minds, we resemble ruminating animals, who derive their greatest pleasure, as well as nourishment, from an after operation. We must, then, take in mental food ; but, we must not always be taking it in : we shall succeed much better by taking a little now and then ; that is, after stated intervals ; and, during those intervals, catching apt seasons for rumination.

My plan, you see, has nothing immoderate in it ; I insist only on what, I soberly think, must be done, in order to ensure undeviating virtue, and unfading comfort. Where there is not natural understanding to be exercised, it is another question : but, where there is, that faculty, as well as every other, must be employed in the service of Him who gave it. If it exists, it must either be sanctified, or unsanctified. In the latter case, I do not say that an original planted root of goodness will be necessarily destroyed ; but it will not, it cannot, bear fruit to perfection. In the former case ;— I mean, where due care is taken to cultivate the

understanding, the whole inner man will advance together; above all, a habit of wise and holy thinking will come in, to supply whatever decay there may be in feeling; or, rather, the spirit and essence of the feeling, will be thus retained, and made permanent; while that alone goes off, which is animal and passionate.

I feel that I am pressing a matter, which cannot be too much dwelt upon; for, here it is, that religion has, hitherto, failed of its full effect, even in most of its sincerest votaries: they have satisfied themselves with sincerity and fervour; that is, with pursuing these qualities; but have, with few exceptions, neglected to attain to wisdom. This, I do believe, was what our Lord meant prophetically to deplore, when he said, that “the children of this world are wiser in their generation, than the children of light.” That is, (as if he had said,) the children of this world give all their powers, — their understandings, as well as their affections, — to the business they are engaged in; and, by this means, they pursue their work, not with diligence only, but with judgment and address; but the same fulness of application, will rarely be exemplified in religion; and, therefore, the church will long remain little more than a nursery for babes.

Is it not exactly the same complaint, which St. Paul makes respecting the Hebrews, when he tells them, that, whereas, for the time, they ought to be teachers, they even needed to be taught, still, the first principles of the oracles of God? and did not he aim, substantially, at the same object which I now press, when he exhorts the Ephesians to be “no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine; but, cultivating truth

in love, (for so ought the expression to be rendered,) grow up into Christ, the Head, in all things?"

For how, let me ask, are these objects to be accomplished, but by use of such mental exercises as I have been recommending? If, in order to growth and establishment, as St. Paul speaks, and in order to sanctification, and true liberty, as Christ himself has declared, truth must be united to love, — truth must be sought; for, it is confessedly not instinctive: and, religious truth, (being of the same nature with truth in general,) must be enquired after, as the truths which belong to any other art, or science, are sought, or the end will not be attained.

But, it may be objected, is not the written word of God, the grand repository of religious truth? and, if a Christian faithfully read, and meditate on, this one volume, may not he, safely, spare himself the time and labour of turning over many others?

I do not answer this objection, because I think you would be apt to make it, but, because some such idea seems to be, at present, peculiarly prevalent; and, indeed, has, in substance, prevailed in the minds of many, since the epoch of the Reformation. I say, then, simply, that, though all religious truth is, radically and essentially, contained in the Holy Scripture; yet, in order to attain a competent knowledge, and distinct apprehension, of that truth, other aids appear to be indispensable; and, therefore, have been providentially afforded.

Nothing can be more perfectly fitted to their end, than the Holy Scriptures; and, when once their wonders shall be fully developed, no other miracle will be necessary, to convert either Jew or Gentile. Of this deeply comfortable fact, I become more and

more convinced, the more I examine the various parts of the sacred volume ; and perceive how divinely they all unite, in one magnificent and infinitely harmonious design : but, I own, I also become more and more assured, that the Bible, is not sufficient, and was never meant to be sufficient, for the interpretation of itself ; even in those parts, which refer most directly to individual salvation. I confine myself to this simple point ; because, respecting other parts of the Bible, no one, in his sober senses, would question what I say : no one would pretend, that prophecy, which occupies so large a portion of the sacred book, could be unravelled, without the aid of history ; or that the poetical books, which also form a large part, could be duly appreciated, without some classical and philological qualifications ; or that the historical parts, which make so much of the remainder, could be read with satisfaction, except elucidating knowledge were sought, from some other quarters.

But, as I said, I confine myself to those parts alone, which relate to the spiritual interests and duties of individual Christians ; to the wants of our moral nature, the provisions of grace, and the results of faithful co-operation : and, respecting these parts, I am very far from questioning that they may be, and, in numerous instances, have been, understood, as far as was strictly necessary for spiritual guidance and consolation, through the mere light of an awakened and spiritualised mind. It is my full persuasion, that, wherever the Holy Scripture speaks directly of what is experimental, the conscious feeling of the matter treated of, will be, for individual profit, beyond comparison, the best interpreter : but, fully granting this, I must add, that, though the cases of

such divine teaching, as I am now supposing, would, from first to last, be numerous, I believe, at any given time, they are of rare occurrence; and, therefore, not, by any means, to be taken as a rule in general: and, especially at this present time, when there is much more of sincere desire, and honest effort, than of clear spiritual attainment. And, even when this latter has been most spoken of, what observer could always distinguish, between fancy and reality, between what was genuine, and what was spurious? Here, therefore, also, we must, if we mean to be wise, exercise our best understanding: and the question is, can we exercise our understanding, ordinarily, to purpose, on the experimental parts of Scripture, without other aids?

I think we cannot; because, in the nature of things, little more can be looked for, in Scripture, than the principles and elements of the Divine science, which is there placed before us. Those principles and elements are, doubtless, not only authentically, but exquisitely, given. The art of God himself has been exercised in forming this divine fund of instruction, to a degree, which it has not yet entered into man's heart to conceive. Yet still, in order to reduce so vast a subject into such narrow limits, the most compendious and condensed method was indispensable; and, consequently, no waste of information, no communication of matters attainable through after-attention and observation, was, in reason, to be expected.

Whatever belongs to the spiritual welfare of man, is, assuredly, in every instance, to be strictly and humbly referred to Holy Scripture, as the one supreme standard. This is that, by which every movement of spiritual life, and every supposed mark of spiritual

growth and perfection, is ultimately to be tried. But, in order to make this use of it with satisfaction, we must be acquainted, in some competent degree, with what has been actually effected, in the Christian world, by means of those divine principles, as well as with the principles themselves. Would any man of good sense account himself a chemist, merely because he had studied, and could quote, the best books of chemistry? No; he would hold himself but a novice; till he had either made, or attended, a course of experiments, in which he saw the laws of chemistry practically exemplified; and, thereby, became informed, under what procedure happy results might be relied on, and through what circumstances they might be liable to fail.

Is this less true respecting that divine chemistry, by which God's Holy Spirit purifies and sublimates our minds and hearts? Considering the variety of human capacity, temper, and circumstances; considering the multiform movements and combinations of society; considering the complexity even of the individual subject; *i. e.* of the faculties, propensities, and susceptibilities of any single man; considering the infinite tendencies to error and self-deception, through weakness, in some, and through perverseness, in others, — what depths must there be, in that compendium of elements and principles, which was formed by unerring Wisdom, on the full foresight of these exigencies. Shall we, then, hope to understand the divine book, without also attending to the experiments in the divine laboratory? In no art, or science, would such a thought be entertained. Shall we admit it in that, which is, of all others, the most profound, and the most momentous?

I cannot err in asserting, that God has always

maintained a laboratory in the interior of his Church, since he has so distinctly said, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." And I cannot believe, that it was through blind accident, that so many of the successive lights of the church have been led to record the experiments made, or witnessed, by them; and, in doing so, to furnish us with a far more copious store of experimental (and, of course, elucidating) knowledge, respecting this first of all studies, than is to be found in any other art or science whatever. I rest assured this is God's providential work, as really, as any part of the divine word is his immediate work; and, therefore, I infer, that this provision is, not only beneficial to all who shall wisely avail themselves of it, but indispensable to the fullest understanding of what most concerns us in the sacred volume; as indispensable, as clinical lectures are to the knowledge of medicine, or as the use of the telescope, microscope, and air-pump, to astronomy, and natural philosophy. The only difference is, that these are the science of but a few, at most; while the science of Christianity, is the one thing needful for all.

I fear it may not be easy to convey a clear idea of the duty I wish to urge, from grounds so indistinctly laid. I shall, probably, seem to throw open a very wide field; and rather to imply hazard of wholly losing one's way, than of acquiring safe guidance. It would, in fact, be the case, if I had in view doctrinal, or polemical research; but, speaking, as it is my purpose to speak, only of what concerns the inward knowledge of God, and what may serve to afford the brightest and surest light to man, in his interior and practical progress through life, I see no room for fearing confusion. The simple object will

be, to form, and maintain, an acquaintance with a competent number of those, who were, at once, the wisest, and holiest men, in the different ages of the church; and to learn, from their concurrent sentiments, what it is of vital consequence for us to prefer, retain, and pursue.

You will observe, that I say, a competent number; for, let the selection be what it might, in kind, — and it need not exceed in bulk, — it must not be too limited; for, then, it could not contain what would be indispensable. But the main object is, to have enough of authenticated specimens, to satisfy us what is truth; and, by that means, enable us to exercise an enlightened judgment, in all our subsequent enquiries.

Examine, now, I intreat you, what I have been saying; and judge whether it is unreasonable. You may know, if you look around you, that no one comes to the Scripture, without applying to it some ideal standard of interpretation: if there be an individual, who seeks, without prejudice, to derive light from Scripture alone, it is one of ten thousand. Some guidance, then, being ever resorted to, I endeavour to point out, what I soberly consider, the only competent, or even safe, guidance; namely, an intelligent acquaintance with a reasonable number of chief luminaries, (those, I mean, whom the whole Christian world allows to be such,) taken, not from one age, or from one denomination, but from different ages, and other churches; especially, from the ancient church, and the followers of its inward piety. For doctrinal or disputatious spirits, I own, this would be the most unsatisfactory method possible; but, for those who wish, as St. Paul exhorts, to be “established in grace, not in meats,” (to find the kernel



of Christianity, and adhere to it for ever,) I know no other certain path.

I presume it will not be denied, that latter times have been more remarkable, for varying "winds of doctrine," than all the ages which preceded them. I have no doubt, but this permission of Providence is most wise. Human weakness has been suffered to accommodate divine truth, and sincere piety, to itself, by successive intermixtures; and, in many instances, the junction is so close, that the sharpest eye is unable, by its own mere power, to discover the distinction; still, a separation, between truth, and its various adjuncts, must take place. "He whose fan is in his hand," will, in this respect, also, "thoroughly purge his floor;" otherwise "we could not all come (as St. Paul deeply expresses it) to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God." There must, then, be a shaking, in order to effectual winnowing; that so, as the same apostle says, (Heb. xii.) "those things which cannot be shaken may remain." Now, if such be the character of our times, what are we to do? Amid varying winds of doctrine, how are we to attain, steadiness of mind, and fixedness of principle?

I answer, We can effect this object, only by not confining our view to the period of unsettledness, but extending it to a more steady season; to that time, I mean, when doctrinal discussions had not commenced, and when pious men thought of nothing, comparatively, but the religion of the heart. Observe, that, in all I am saying, it is the last matter of enquiry which I look toward. There are many instances, in which latter times have much clearer light; and in which, to recur to earlier times, would

be to go out of one's way. But the science of true piety, has not yet become a subject of improvement. It has been largely tampered with, and, not a little, new modified : but it has not been made, either more intelligible, or more efficacious. On the contrary, there are scarcely any two denominations, of those who are still maintainers of inward piety, that would speak exactly alike respecting it ; and not one description, as far as I know, that could satisfy any mind, which was intent on having a thoroughly rational view of the subject. The person, who would not be content with taking his religion on the credit of his teachers, but would demand strict definitions, and a consistent analysis of the scheme, might apply to many quarters, before he would find himself enlightened. In truth, my suspicion is, that, in proportion to the acuteness of his mind, he would be likely to close his research, by rejecting all pretences to inward piety, and taking up with one or other of those cold-blooded systems, which his predecessors in the same search, and the same disappointment, have now, for so many years, been forming. Besides these cases, which, I conceive, are continually occurring, how large a portion is there of those, who, holding all the revealed truths of Christianity, reject inward religion wholly, as a fanatical illusion. In modern teaching, therefore, I absolutely see no ground for an enquiring mind to rest upon ; and the consequence is, that almost every enquiring mind goes, more or less, adrift : it feels itself necessitated to be its own guide ; and, moving very much at random, the great chance is, that it becomes bewildered, and, perhaps, sceptical.

What an unspeakable comfort is it, then, to be conscious, amid this labyrinth of error, of having got actual hold of a sure clue of truth ! What com-

fort to see, with the mind's eye, a luminous path, passing, without deviation, through successive ages; and marked, as it were, with the footsteps of all those, whom the pious and learned, even of discordant sects, have agreed to honour! To perceive this cloud of witnesses, agreeing in the same great truths, using the same means, rejoicing in the same attainments, uniting in the same heartfelt testimony; to what Christianity both requires from us, and accomplishes in us! Than this, what can be more cheering, what more satisfactory? What the actual fulfilment of divine predictions is to the prophetic parts of Holy Scripture, this harmonic testimony is, equally, to the experimental parts of Holy Scripture. What such a series of holy men did not hold, cannot be essential: what they did agree in holding (or, rather, in describing, as wrought in them,) cannot be visionary. Here, then, we have an evidence of the reality, and depth of inward religion, which nothing can shake; and we have a standard, by which to assure ourselves, what really belongs to it, as a part of itself, and what is merely attached to it, as temporary and extraneous.

I believe, most assuredly, that, if we make religion at all a matter of close thought, we can be sure of satisfaction, on that enlarged plan only, which I now lay down. "He," says Richard Baxter, "that knoweth nothing, but what he hath seen; or receiveth a Bible, or the Creed, without knowing, any farther, whence, and which way it cometh to us, is greatly disadvantaged as to the reception of the faith;" and, therefore, says he, "be well acquainted, if possible, with church history, that you may understand, by what tradition Christianity hath descended to us." If this be a just remark, respecting the mere evidence of

Christianity, how much more strongly does it hold good, respecting its interior nature, and experimental effects? St. Paul took this method, at once to instruct those whom he was addressing, and to edify himself. In the 11th chapter of the Hebrews, he begins with Abel, and comes down (as if to set us an example) into those later periods of Jewish history, which he could know only from the common records of the nation. Are we to make this use of Jewish history alone? or, did the cloud of witnesses stop at that time, and retain no room for after additions? If it did not; if, on the contrary, the Christian Church was, yet more, to be the sphere of efficacious faith; then it becomes our duty to trace out, for our instruction and consolation, the similar series of witnesses, which has proceeded onward, through the successive times of the Christian dispensation; and, by that means, to possess a second, and still more copious part of the same luminous guidance, which rightly disposed readers have peculiarly found, in that noble portion of the New Testament.

“How,” says Baxter, “may we certainly know the success of Christ’s doctrine, in the regeneration of his disciples?”

“As to times past, we may know it, — 1. by the history of those ages; 2. by their remaining works.”

“1st. That there have been holy persons, in all ages, we have as good testimony as history can afford, whether you will judge of them by their profession, life, or sufferings.” — “2d. Their remaining works are very great testimonies. What a spirit of holiness, charity, and justice, doth breathe in the writings of these holy men, which have come to our hands? Clemens Romanus, Ignatius, Cyprian, Ephrem Syrus, Macarius, Augustine, Gregory Na-

zianzen, Gregory Nissen, Basil, Ambrose, Chrysostom, Salvian, Cassianus, Bernard," &c.

I once more ask, if Baxter urges the expanded view, for the sake of mere evidence that Christ's religion has wrought effectually, how much more necessary is it, in order to our rightly judging of the manner in which it works, and the means of which it makes chief use? If, according to him, belief of Christianity is not what it ought to be, until it is strengthened by these supports of distinct and extended knowledge, how much less can there be certainty or skill, respecting its vital operations, until those operations have been studied, in a competent number of the above authentic specimens?

Will this startle you; as if, after all, I wished to make your son a man of letters? I do not: it all terminates in the one point, — the learning of French. Let him read only that one easy language; and make the approved theological writers in it (that is, a select few of them) his daily acquaintances; and they will make for him, without search or trouble, a further acquaintance with their constant oracles, the above-mentioned, and other fathers. Then, in proportion as any translations of those venerable authors come in his way, (and French translations are, every now and then, occurring,) he may pick them up, and make his knowledge still more and more distinct, and digested.

I have nothing further to add, on this subject: I only hope you will fully understand me: I wish your son to be deeply, and wisely, pious. This is my grand object: to that end, I wish him to understand the Scriptures, so as that he may be like "a tree planted by the rivers of water," and not like "a reed shaken by the wind." The sacred truths of God's word, are the rivers; — the streams of that fountain, "which

proceedeth out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb." But the measure in which these are taken in by the mind, will depend, in a great degree, on the soil in which it was planted ; that is, on the stated habits of thinking, to which it is formed, — whether they are deep, or shallow ; whether they are like the sand, which is pervious to every influence, and shifting with every blast ; or, like that fertile mould, which is neither too loose, nor too tenacious. Solicitous that your son should be "rooted and grounded" in all that is excellent, I would fain assist in fixing him, where every thing concurs to constitute the best and deepest soil, and where all experience proves that beautiful picture of the Psalmist to have been realised : " they that be planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of the house of our God. They shall bring forth fruit in their age, and shall be fat, and well-liking."

In a word, to use another metaphor, — I merely wish to take your son out of a confined space, where he must ever be encircled with high-built walls, obstructing every view, and compelling him, through very necessity, to pore on the objects immediately around him ; I wish, I say, merely to bring him out of this imprisonment, to a rising ground, where he shall have some little command of prospect, and be able to judge, whither (if he moves) he may move with most safety, and where (if he rests) he may rest with fullest comfort.

Since I began to write this letter, I have met, in my friend Dr. Clarke's preface to his Comment, what I cannot but deem a corroboration of my ideas ; I mean, in the testimony he gives to Calmet's commentary. " It is," says he, " without exception, the best comment ever published on the sacred

writings; and has left little to be desired for the completion of such a work." After lamenting its scarceness and high price, and adverting to the too general prohibition implied in its language, he adds, that it will ever form one of the most valuable parts of the private library, of every biblical student, and divine. You will believe I read this with some private and personal pleasure, when I state, that I myself was, at the moment, using Calmet, as my companion, in going through the Epistle to the Hebrews. Since I knew this work, I have considered it above all comments yet published; but the question is, what made Calmet so very superior? I dispute not any one quality Dr. C. has assigned to him; only, I am not sure I should have attributed deep piety. I, also, particularly admire, the candid use he makes of Protestant commentators; but my conviction is, that his profound acquaintance with the fathers (directed, as it was, by peculiarly solid judgment) laid the foundation of his excellence: I am persuaded, that, without this, he never would have merited Dr. Clarke's praise; and I especially think, that his "deep piety" comes, directly, from that matchless store, of energetic thoughts, and glowing sentiments.

It is the peculiar property of the fathers, to give, every now and then, compendiums of religious truth, at once the briefest, and most luminous. When they reason, they seldom excel; when they treat of external facts, they discover the prejudices incident to their respective circumstances; but, when they treat of piety itself, — of the substantial life of the inner man, — they rise above all, except the sacred writers. Let me just exemplify what

I now assert, by a sentence or two from St. Augustine.

“ Two kinds of love, divide the whole world into two cities : the love of God, constitutes Jerusalem ; the love of the world, forms Babylon : therefore, let every one interrogate himself, and ascertain, of which he is a citizen.”

“ As there are two faculties in the medical art, — one, by which malady is healed, the other, by which health is preserved, so are there two gifts of grace ; one, by which carnality is overcome, the other, by which the soul is preserved in virtue.”

“ Every command of God is light, to him that loves : nor is that saying, ‘ My burthen is light,’ to be otherwise understood, than as the effect of love, shed abroad in the heart, by the Holy Spirit. For what we do through love, we do freely ; while, what one does through fear, he does as a slave. The mind never is upright, when it would rather that (if it could be) that which is right were not commanded.”

“ There are two lives ; one of the body, the other of the soul. As the soul is the life of the body, so the life of the soul is God ; and, as the body dies, when deserted by the soul, so the soul dies, when deserted by Christ.”

“ True wisdom is to be sought after, during the tranquillity of peace ; since it is not easily discovered, during the hurricanes of affliction. We cannot expect to find places of shelter, in a storm, which we did not look for, while it was calm.”

These, I own, are plain sayings ; but they contain in them the solidest principles of practical religion ; and, sure I am, it is only by adhering to these, and such as these, that the heart can be established ;



and that it is only by recurring to them, that one can escape the strife of tongues.

I shall speedily endeavour to write to Mr. Parken<sup>1</sup>; to whom I pray you to convey my sincerest respects.

Believe me,

Most truly yours,

ALEXANDER KNOX.

<sup>1</sup> An eminent barrister ; and editor of the Eclectic Review.

LETTER TO JOSEPH HENRY BUTTERWORTH, ESQ., ON  
THE LINE OF STUDY TO BE PURSUED BY HIM.

MY DEAR JOSEPH,

June 28. 1810.

It is not, I assure you, through neglect, that your letter of the 29th of May has remained so long unanswered: it found me moving from Dublin; afterwards, a still farther movement occurred; and I have, also, been more than usually indisposed: these have been the causes of my silence. I now sit down to say something to you, though I cannot report myself perfectly well yet. I do not, however, very much regard my complaints, except as to present uneasiness: they are nervous; arising, I believe, from the unusual sickness of the season. More persons, within the circle of my acquaintance, have died, than I have recollection of, within the same space of time.

I was obliged to you for your letter; and cordially agree with you in what you say about our worthy friend, Mr. S——. I assure you, I consider him an invaluable man. I regret, only, that any thing should occur to sadden such a mind; or to weaken the tenour of so interesting a life. But Divine Providence cannot err; and, therefore, what happens unavoidably, will, assuredly, prove beneficial in the issue, if we ourselves be not blameably deficient.

It would give me sincere pleasure, to communicate any thought of mine, that could be serviceable to you; but there is great difficulty in marking out a plan of reading. There are few books, especially in our language, the whole of which deserves to be read.

The question, then, is, how much, or how little? This can be settled only by circumstances; previous knowledge, special pursuit, prevalent taste, &c. &c., must come, to determine whether the reading of any book, valuable as it may be in itself, is to be entire or partial, rapid or deliberate.

One thing I must observe to you, before every thing else of the same nature;—that you must resolve to recover your knowledge of French. This is all, of the kind, for which I stipulate; and I do so, because, on every account, I think it indispensable. On Latin, I will not press you, from what you tell me: it is too late, I see, for you to gain any facility in it; and some degree of facility must exist, in order to the making use of any thing. In French, you may easily make progress: twenty minutes, or half an hour, a day, for one year, would advance you more, perhaps, than you can now imagine. Remember, I speak of understanding French; not of writing, or even pronouncing it (these are the difficult parts): there is really no difficulty, in acquiring the power of taking up a French book, and reading it, (by the eye, without the ear,) as if it were English.

My young friend, I repeat it, this is indispensable. No one can be sure, that he is always either speaking or writing good sense, except he knows some language besides his own. I acknowledge, good and excellent sense may be written without this: my position is, that it cannot be matter of certainty. There is a knowledge of grammar to be derived, from comparing the combination of words in one language, with that which we find in another, that nothing short of such a comparison can supply. He that has this power, can always correct himself, and criticise his own writing: without it, one cannot be sure that

some error in combination, may not have escaped from the pen ; the mind having no adequate standard of detection.

But this is the least, and lowest advantage. Far beyond this, the knowledge of French gives direct mental intercourse, with all matters of intellectual moment in the modern world ; French being the language, in which, the greater number of useful books, on the Continent, are originally written, and into which, all are translated. That one language is the key to modern literature ; and, as far as matters of this world are concerned, I venture to say, that no one mental acquirement confers so much intellectual advantage, at once, upon its possessor, as that easiest of all acquirements, the knowledge of French.

In addition to these reasons, I tell you fairly, that I should not know how to advise you, to my own satisfaction, in the matter of religious reading, if you were unable to mingle French, with English authors. I can truly say, I should have been at such a loss, as goes beyond my own idea, much more my expression, if I had continued ignorant of the French language. On the other hand, to know this, so as to read it with ease and readiness, is, in some sort, a substitute for the knowledge of Greek and Latin : because Greek and Latin Fathers of the Church are found translated into French ; when they are not to be met, and, indeed, do not exist, in English. I might say much, before this point would have justice done to it. If I thought it necessary, I should go on to state farther motives ; but I hope I have said enough ; especially, as the matter in question involves no difficulty, and will scarcely require labour. Only acquaint yourself with one regular verb, the two auxiliary verbs, the most commonly occurring irre-

gular verbs, the pronouns, the most common prepositions, and the three little words which meet one every now and then, *on*, *en*, and *y*, or, rather, the compound of the last with the verb *avoir*,—as, *il y a*, there is; *il y avoit*, there was,—and the business is, in a manner, done : every day's reading, after such a beginning, will be felt more and more easy ; and, in a month or two, the whole trouble will consist in recurring, now and then, to your grammar, or looking for a few words in the dictionary.

I have only to observe, farther, that, if your father were to get you a good master to attend you ; who would not trouble you with pronunciation, but merely assist you, at the first, in construing ; and, also, make you write a few exercises, in order to your more accurate acquaintance with the structure of the language ; your acquirement of French, as far as it could be necessary for your purpose, would be as easy as it would be rapid ; and, after a very few months,—perhaps I might say weeks,—you would need a master no farther.

I can assure, both you and your father, that I would be as far from giving you fanciful advice, or such as could divert your mind from the line of business you are to be engaged in, as any friend of his or yours : but I do feel strongly,—and I thank God, that I have had the feeling,—that, to neglect the mind, for the sake of any thing earthly, is high treason against the laws of nature. The great mass, hitherto, could not commit this crime ; because, either they had not minds to cultivate, or their minds were never awakened to activity, or even consciousness. But Providence is now, clearly, putting things on another footing. Knowledge is spreading into the dark places of the earth ; and, to

be ignorant, will be a disgrace of a far different kind, from what it ever was before. A good English scholar has, hitherto, been a reputable character; because, to be so, was not a common thing. Now, through the aid of Sunday-schools, first, and of Dr. Bell and Joseph Lancaster, next; and through means, at the same time, of reviews, magazines, and newspapers, innumerable,—good English scholars will be, in comparison of what they were, probably as one hundred to one; so that those who were sufficiently distinguished, by being good English scholars, must now rise a step higher, or forfeit their place in the intellectual scale of society.

I admire the wisdom of Providence, in making such an advance in knowledge so easily attainable. I have stated my opinion, already, that the knowledge of French is the key to modern literature; and, I can most truly add, that no acquirement can imply less expense of time or trouble. The good lady, whom you saw with me in London, sat down, two or three years ago, and taught herself to read French. After a very short time, it began to be a pleasure to her; and I am sure she would not now (if it were possible) return to her former ignorance, for any earthly consideration.

I know nothing, except Divine Revelation itself, in which the adorable wisdom of God appears more luminously, than in the arrangement of languages. Had the materials of human knowledge been equally scattered, amongst all the dialects of the earth, they never could have been brought together, into a regular system. To know all languages, would have been impossible; and to choose, amongst so many of equal pretension, would have implied inextricable puzzle. Mental stagnation would, of course, have

been the consequence ; and man would have remained the same dull thing, from generation to generation.

See, then, how profoundly it was ordained, that two languages should be the chief depositories of all ancient learning ; namely, Latin and Greek : so that, now, he who knows these two, becomes able to converse, without the aid of an interpreter, with the brightest sages of remote antiquity, — with historians, philosophers, and poets ; and, what is much more, with saints, martyrs, and apostles. To you I mention this, but by the bye, and for the purpose of making myself fully intelligible, in what I am going to say. Unfortunately, even they who possess the matter of this providential blessing, seldom know the value of it. In fact, it is in using it aright, that the value can alone be known ; and, perhaps, not one in an hundred, of those who are taught these languages, have either the inclination, or the skill, to turn them to true account : he that knows them not, is, therefore, scarcely worse off, than the generality of those who know them ; since, in most hands, they are so truly dead languages. My comfortable hope is, that it will not always be so.

In the mean time, Providence has taken exactly a similar care for the modern world, as for the ancient ; and, what Latin and Greek were to past events, and to the wisdom of antiquity, French and English, I conceive, are, with respect to present events, and modern improvements. He that can read both English and French, is in possession of the two great intellectual conduits of Providence, in these later, and most momentous, periods of the world. Greek was the language of truth and philosophy ; and Latin was resorted to, as the means of

still more extensively diffusing those treasures, through the mass of mankind. French, like Latin, is now, I conceive, the language of diffusion ; while English, like Greek, is the more direct and primary instrument of truth, and philosophy : I mean, that English is the language in which new advances will, most probably, be made, in truth and philosophy ; while French will be that, which will diffuse English wisdom through the world, as well as that, which will afford readiest, and fullest access, to the wisdom of former ages. It is easy, for example, as I already hinted, to find the ancient fathers translated in French ; whereas, I know few instances of their being translated at all, and fewer still, of their being well translated, into English.

I need not adduce farther motives, respecting the usefulness of the French language : as it is, I find myself guilty of repetition, in consequence of the interruption, from indisposition, and travelling, to which this letter has been liable. And yet, I cannot avoid, once more, committing the same fault, in adverting to the comparative scantiness of good religious reading, in the English language.

I am aware, that this opinion of mine would be questioned by many ; and yet, after all that I can think of, as arguments or evidences against it, I am obliged to adhere to it. There are, in the English language, some who write most piously, and others, who write most rationally, on religious subjects : but my complaint is, that these two qualities, are seldom as fully combined as I could wish. The more pious writers, being seldom as rational, and the more rational, seldom as deeply pious, as might be desired.

For example, the non-conformist writers of the seventeenth century manifest, in general, the sincerest



piety: most of their books were written while they themselves were in a state of persecution; and, needing the support of piety, they take to it with cordiality. I am sure their works have done good to many, both in their own time, and since; yet, sincerely as I respect this class of writers, I cannot, except in one or two instances, recommend them. They all write in fetters; either doctrinal or sectarian prejudices, or both, confine their minds, and give a contracted character to their writings. They intend to follow St. Paul; but they follow one another, in one grand scheme of misconception. That they do so, might, I think, be demonstrated, to any unbiassed mind: there is, however, something in the misconception, when once it is fully formed, which is not to be corrected by any reasoning. In misinterpreting St. Paul, Luther and Calvin differed somewhat from each other; and yet, I scarcely know which of them missed the mark most. The sincere, of both parties, have, doubtless, caught enough of truth, to secure salvation to all of them that are upright in heart, but, certainly, not enough to give satisfaction to any unfettered mind.

The most celebrated divines of the Church of England have been aware of these errors, and have sought truth in a purer form: in some respects, they have succeeded admirably; and the cause of rational religion owes much to their labours: not to read them, would be, to lose both profit and pleasure; yet, wholly to trust to them, as if they did full justice to Christian piety, is what I cannot advise: you may see, in part, but not fully, what I think on this point in the review of Bishop Taylor, in the Eclectic Review.

The great fault I find, with this latter class, is, that

they do not lay sufficient stress, on the peculiar features of Christianity : they have the noblest views of its morality ; but they do not sufficiently explain the evangelic provision for making that morality attainable : I mean, the illuminating, quickening, purifying, and heart-elevating influences, of God manifest in the flesh : they scarcely seem, themselves, to have understood them ; at least, not perfectly ; and, therefore, they have not perfectly propounded them to their readers. I think I have already dwelt upon this defect, in my long letter to your father.

On the other hand, Calvinistic writers, though not chargeable with inattention to our blessed Saviour, cannot be said to do full justice to the work which he accomplishes. Their notion of a forensic, and imputative salvation, seems to have weakened their concern for the one thing needful. Had *two* things been needful for us to attend to,—an imputative, and an actual salvation, our Lord would, doubtless, have said so : but this discovery of latter times (for, certainly, it was not known in the Church, during the fourteen centuries which preceded Luther and Calvin), this discovery, I say, would be less objectionable, if the theoretical salvation, did not divert attention from the practical guilt. Punishment—God's wrath, (not his immutable detestation of moral evil, but his punitive vengeance,) are so kept in view, as to be made the great subjects of anxiety ; while sin itself, the evil of evils, may, too often, be comparatively disregarded, through solicitude about its supposed consequences. I say, its supposed consequences, for what, in reality, can these be, but the natural fruits of sin itself? What, in the whole universe, could make a pure spirit (which, in virtue of that purity, saw and de-

lighted in the "all-present God) unhappy; or what, in heaven itself, could make an impure spirit (and, therefore, incapable of God), any thing but miserable? Surely, this tells us what is, really, the one thing needful; since he has said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

It is not, therefore, on theoretic grounds, that I complain of deficiency, in both these classes of writers; nor is the complaint meant to be severe: I am sure they have both done good, in their several ways; and I have no doubt, that many of the disciples of both descriptions, have risen far above the instructions they received outwardly, through the deeper teaching of the divine Spirit, received into "an honest and good heart." "I understand more than the Ancients," said the Psalmist, "because I keep thy precepts." He, whose heart seeks wisdom, at its fountain head, (I mean, by intercourse with God himself,) rises above outward deficiencies; as a bird, that has his wings, cannot be confined within the highest wall. Still, outward teaching is necessary; and, consequently, it becomes a question of moment, how may one come at the most perfect instruction?

I answer, it is on this very ground I am so earnest for your being able to read French; for, I am acquainted with no modern writers, by whom the energies of Christianity are so directly applied to their true purpose, as by thoroughly spiritual writers of the Church of Rome. I, of course, mean, here, no wholesale approbation: but, while these have their own faults, from which the two classes of our religious writers are free; they have their excellencies, which are not equally possessed by the others: they continually turn the view of the mind, to our blessed Redeemer; and they point to him, as an

inward, and spiritual Saviour. They advert to him with as much cordiality as the most pious Calvinists ; while they do so for a far higher purpose. It is his vitally influential Spirit within them, not his righteousness imputed to them, which they look for : they have no idea of any other salvation, than that which frees them from the slavery of sin ; and gives the pledge, and earnest of heaven, to a man, within his own purified bosom.

But, are there no English writers, who can exemplify something, at least, of the same excellence ; and who may, of course, be resorted to, in the mean time, with hope of advantage ?

I answer, there are many Church-of-England divines, and not a few dissenters, who may be read with great benefit. I have, therefore, meant no dissuasive, against reading pious authors of either class ; but, merely, a caution against the implicit trust : especially, I must say, where the writer is Calvinistical ; for here, I conceive, there is positive error ; and, to some minds, (I do not much fear for yours,) not a little infection. In the Church-of-England writers, there is defect ; but defect can hardly imply contagion.

I think your father has John Smith's " Select Discourses : " these, I place at the head of the Church-of-England class. They are a noble volume ; furnishing, in every page, the sublimest views of Christian piety. To these I would add, Lucas's " Enquiry after Happiness ; " the second volume of which cannot be too often resorted to. An invaluable little work, of this class, is, " Worthington on Self-resignation ; " a tract, which has this peculiar recommendation, that the author, self-evidently, drew his rich stores, from his own heart. I can say little less,

of the third volume of Bishop Taylor's Sermons ; while, in matter and manner, they are equal to any thing, and superior to most things, in the English language. If I mistake not, I have spoken of Worthington's tract particularly, in my long letter, written formerly to your father.

Calvinistic writers of the Church of England, are, **in** general, greater opposites to these last-mentioned divines, than puritans themselves. What, therefore, I say of Calvinists, in general, applies fully to Church-of-England Calvinists, in particular ; one writer, excepted, who, in earlier life, was a strong Calvinist, and yet, is one of the most deeply pious writers in our language ; I mean, Archbishop Leighton. Were I to enlarge on this admirable author, I should have some exceptions to make : I mean, I should be obliged to state several matters, in which he is not exactly to my taste ; still, whatever be his deficiencies, or errors, his excellent qualities place him at the head of modern religious writers. His talents were noble : and his devotion was sublime : his theology, however, has something gloomy in it, even when Calvinistic ~~writers~~<sup>tenets</sup> are most out of view : I think he was of a melancholy complexion. These defects, alone, prevented him from exemplifying a heaven upon earth : for, assuredly, he is a human angel ; except that he wants cheerfulness : on the whole, I advise you, every now and then, to read more or less of Archbishop Leighton.

Of non-conformist writers, Richard Baxter is the chief. He agrees with Calvinists, in some of his notions ; but his theological scheme is in direct opposition, to what I conceive the worst parts of Calvinism. Many of his works are valuable. I like, best of all his works, his " Divine Life ;" particularly,

the middle treatise, on Walking with God. The three treatises on Knowledge of God, Walking with God, and Converse with God in solitude, make a small quarto volume (entitled as above), which I advise you to procure : I fear it is scarce ; but it well deserves a republication, notwithstanding that, now going on (if I mistake not), of his whole works ; single tracts being, at once, more portable, and so much more easily purchased.

Baxter, however, is not without defect : it seems to me, that, in exercising the two great powers of his mind,—thought, and feeling,—on divine subjects, thought rises above feeling, and seems, for the most part, in a kind of struggle, to draw up feeling after it. Baxter thought, so strongly, and so nobly, that it is not strange *that* faculty should, in him, claim all its rights ; and yet, I think, if feeling had taken the lead more, and thought had followed in its train, (employing its investigating and elucidating power, on what was already tasted and enjoyed in the heart,) the act of thinking would have been more perfect in itself, and its exercise far more delightful. Baxter, I conceive, owes this blemish, to his too-much indulged love of metaphysical subtlety ; and particularly, to an abstruse, and indistinct notion of the Trinity, which he was led to adopt, I know not at what period of life ; but, as far as I can judge, with no happy influence on the after movements of his mind. Few, I fear, are duly aware, of the danger of speculating on this great point. For my part, I must say, that I have never known an instance, within my acquaintance, or my reading, in which doubts or obscurities, respecting the full, and proper Godhead of the Redeemer, did not injure the religious happiness of him who was possessed by them. In Baxter, however, the error existed, in its

slightest possible form ; and, though it has made him less perfect, it has not destroyed his excellence.

John Howe, amongst the non-conformists, stands next to Baxter. He, too, suffered the scale of his mind to preponderate, too much, on the thinking side : yet he is a valuable writer ; and, should you meet his treatise on delighting in God, I advise you to have it.

There is a good little volume, by another non-conformist, Samuel Shaw ; the principal treatises in which are, "A Welcome to the Plague," (written in 1665,) and a larger work, entitled, "Immanuel." I advise you to get this book : the author was pious, learned, and liberal, above many of his contemporaries.

Amongst more modern non-conformists, my favourite is Doddridge. I dislike his ecclesiastical notions strongly ; and I dissent from several things he says on theological subjects : — but, in what directly concerns the piety of the heart, I know not a man, in the last century, to be set above him. No one more perfectly exemplified the Christian spirit ; or could seem more deeply to enjoy that inward, and unbroken peace, which is the privilege of the perfect man. It is to be regretted only, that he was led to adopt so much of the Calvinistic phraseology ; when (I do believe) his own heart, left to its own unbiassed movement, would have expressed itself much more happily. He, accordingly, is, in my view, much more valuable, in those parts of his writings, which relate, wholly to what is inward, and matured in religion. His addresses to beginners, whether in sermons, or in his "Rise and Progress of Religion," I do not equally delight in. His *Life*, by Orton, is worth

reading, and often recurring to. You should have all Doddridge's works.

I think I have now said enough, respecting religious writers, until you put it in my power to recommend French authors. When that time comes, if I am living, I shall be ready to give you the best thoughts I have. In what I have already said, I have meant to keep your avocations, as a man of business, in view : but I have attended to this great and important fact, that true religion, is not a scheme of notions in the head ; but a settled, predominant, disposition of the heart : that it is the awakening, the growth, the activity, the healthfulness, and, at length, the established ascendancy, of that higher part of our nature, which we have in common with angels, and which is to live for ever. It is this higher nature, I say, disenthralled from its first bondage, asserting its rights, practising its wings, living on its divinely appointed food, and rejoicing in its congenial objects. Christianity, I consider as the divinely contrived machinery, for raising our minds to this holy, and happy height. Every fact of Christian Revelation, every display of Divine power, wisdom, or goodness, in either Testament, is intended, and fitted, to produce this effect upon us, to accomplish this purpose in us. In human endeavours, therefore, to subserve this design, I make my estimate, by the directness, the simplicity, the wisdom, and energy, with which the end is pursued ; and I conceive, that a few religious authors, in whom these qualifications competently meet, read frugally, (I mean, by small portions, with much intermingled thought, — and, above all, devotional thought, — and even read over and over again,) will



prove more useful, than larger, and, of course, more promiscuous, reading.

I now recollect, that I have not named my old friend, John Wesley. It was not because I wished him to be forgotten : I am persuaded he will never be forgotten. But I took for granted, you would be yourself acquainted with his writings. And yet, John Wesley is, in my opinion, to be read with much discrimination. Nothing can be purer, or nobler, than all his views of inward religion : he would have it carried to its height ; and he would admit nothing that could adulterate it. But his notions of the manner in which inward religion is attained, have in them, much, which an impartial observer will question. He seems to think, in many parts of his writings, that, the more quickly effects are produced, the better. It might have been the better, on some accounts, in that particular department of God's husbandry, in which John Wesley was employed : but it would not hold good generally. Our Saviour's implied rule, is of far more universal application : "It sprung up quickly, because there was no depth of earth." The rapidity, therefore, and, of course, the strong emotions, which frequently attended Mr. Wesley's labours, and are often adverted to, with expressions of satisfaction, in his writings, I conceive to have belonged much more to his special destination, than to the general ends of Christianity. Without these movements, probably, Mr. Wesley's vocation would have been, comparatively, without fruit : but individuals who are providentially fitted to seek religion for themselves, are, in general, led in another way. With them, except in some particular cases, matters proceed gradually, and noiselessly. They may have conflicts with their corruptions, or

weakness ; and may obtain opportune deliverance, or aid : they may be deeply sensible of variations within ; may often tremble at the view of spiritual danger ; and rejoice in an increase of inward strength, which raises them above their fear. But, still, the progress will be gradual, not revolutionary : it will be, doubtless, in the strictest sense, experimental, provided there be cordiality and right information ; but, the course will not be anywhere marked with extraordinary transitions, from darkness to light, or from light to darkness.

Mr. Wesley's disciples were, chiefly, those, who had received, by his means, the first impressions of religion. They bore resemblance to the man, in the Gospel, who found the hidden treasure in a field ; who was surprised into wealth, for which he was not searching. Fear and joy are described, in his case ; and analogous emotions, almost universally, marked theirs. But those who are religiously educated, and possess the means of seeking Christian piety for themselves, correspond to that other example, the parable immediately following ; I mean, the merchantman seeking goodly pearls : in this person's case there is no surprise, no remarkable emotions : what he finds, he had been looking for ; and, therefore, though all is done as effectually, it is accomplished more quietly, and, obviously, with much greater ease : for, be it observed, that he who finds the treasure, is obliged to purchase the field ; otherwise he could not have what it contained : but he who bought the pearl, had no need to take anything but itself. Just so, the convert of a society, or sect, cannot hope to go on well, nor to attain what he has got knowledge of, except by taking religion, as he finds it among his teachers, and uniting himself to

them, that he may share with them in their pursuits: but he, who is providentially qualified to seek religion for himself, if he faithfully exercises his reason, (as well as sets his heart on that which is his main concern,) will not fail to go on rationally, as well as comfortably, without any necessity for supernumerary aids, and without liability to internal fluctuation.

Making, however, a fair distinction, between John Wesley's views, as a Christian and a divine, on the one hand, and as the leader and head of a specially destined religious society, on the other, I do consider him, and ever must consider him, as an instrument in the hand of Providence, for signally and powerfully enlightening the Christian world. It is my sober conviction, that a discriminating reader may find, in his writings, a fuller, and more perfect; concentration of evangelical principles, than has elsewhere been exemplified. He has, in my opinion, caught the central truth, of practical, that is, of experimental, Christianity, with a directness, and a simplicity, that no uninspired man, before, attained to. And, by this means, he has done more than any other man, toward disincumbering true religion of that scaffolding of opinions, which Divine wisdom has so long permitted to adhere to, and (in the view of many) to appear part of, the building. John Wesley's sentiments of religion, therefore, regarded (as they clearly admit of being regarded) apart from all ideas, which his external plans suggested, I consider invaluable; inasmuch as I know no other instance, ancient or modern, of the philosophy of the Gospel being so distinctly, and impressively exhibited. \*

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\* I have given this praise to J. W. in the freedom and confidence of private correspondence; but I would wish to re-consider my expressions, before finally dismissing them as my settled judgment.

Thus much, I thought it my duty to state, concerning the imperishable worth of my never-to-be-forgotten old friend. I will now conclude this too long letter, with a specimen of what I do so much prize in him: the words are not many, but they contain a world of truth, and they throw off almost a world of incumbrances.

“By salvation, I mean, not barely, according to the vulgar notion, deliverance from hell, or going to heaven; but, a present deliverance from sin; a restoration of the soul to its primitive health, its original purity; a recovery of the Divine nature; the renewal of our souls after the image of God, in righteousness and in true holiness, in justice, mercy, and truth. This implies all holy and heavenly tempers; and, by consequence, all holiness of conversation.”

“Now, without faith, we cannot be thus saved, for we cannot rightly serve God, unless we love him; and we cannot love him, unless we know him; neither can we know God, unless by faith. Therefore, salvation by faith is only, in other words, the love of God, by the knowledge of God; or, the recovery of the image of God, by a true spiritual acquaintance with him.”

In my mind, here, is everything in a nutshell. What can we want, or what need we be solicitous about, but that salvation which is here described? and how can we otherwise attain it, than by having the infinitely important facts, which are placed before us in holy Scripture, divinely impressed upon our minds and hearts? This divine impression is the grace of faith; which we cannot, either in commencement, or degree, give to ourselves, but which God has promised to give to those, who earnestly implore it, and who evince their sincerity, by using whatever portion they have obtained already.

This is the one thing needful; the business of life, and the happiness of both worlds.

Possibly, you wished I should have taken a wider range; and recommended other, besides religious books. Could I direct you in your more miscellaneous reading, I should be glad; and, if you wish it, I will not refuse to say something, though it can be but very little: for I am ill-informed in all miscellaneous matters. My object, now, has been, to finish this letter; which, in consequence of more indisposition than I have experienced for the last ten years, has been thus long unwillingly delayed.

I am,

Most truly, and faithfully yours,

ALEX. KNOX.

## ON JUSTIFICATION.—TO D. PARKEN, Esq.

Dublin, Dawson St., April 16. 1810.

DEAR SIR,

HAVING three weeks since forwarded to you, through the castle of Dublin, my remarks on Taylor, and having received no notification of their coming to hand, I begin to feel uneasiness, lest they should not have reached you. A mis-direction may certainly have taken place. I, perhaps, was in error, or the gentleman at the castle may have miswritten or misspelt. — My direction was, D. Parken, Esq., 41. Castle Street, Holborn, London. Inquiry of the letter-carrier, or at the Post-office, may still lead to a discovery. If the worst should come to the worst, I have a tolerably correct copy, from which I can still make another transcript, though I should much rather find that what I sent were safe.

I began to put some thoughts on paper, respecting your query, and, as soon as some urgent matters allow me time, I hope to give you what strikes me on the subject, which I certainly think deeply deserving of consideration.

The Post-office has become strangely dilatory, in conveying periodical works. I have received my packet of them only this morning. The person who sends them is a Mr. Austin. Whether remonstrating on this side of the water will mend the matter, I do not know, but I mean to make the trial.

The first thing I open upon in the Eclectic for April, is, Art. xiii., in which, short as the whole of

it is I find, as I conceive, a want of due information on an important subject. The question respecting baptism, as explained by the Church of England, is prudently passed over. (It would be well, if the *Christian Observer* would practise like caution on the same subject.) But, in adverting to Mr. W.'s view of justification, as involving "a physical change," (would not moral have been the fit epithet? Nobody, I suppose, asserts a physical change!) it is said, that the confounding of the two, (justification and sanctification,) was "characteristic of the Catholic divines, in their controversy with the reformers."

"Characteristic of,"—as it is used here, would seem equivalent to "peculiar or appropriate to:" but this, if meant, is not a correct statement. It was certainly not peculiar to the Roman Catholic divines of that day, to represent justification as a moral, and not merely a relative change. Mr. Milner, the author of the *Church History*, is, on this point, a most decisive witness; being himself as much devoted, to the forensic notion of justification, as any Roman Catholic could be to the moral idea. And yet, from the end of the first century, to the Reformation, he is, with hardly an exception, lamenting over the obscurity and confusion (as he deems it) of the fathers of the church. Ambrose is, perhaps, the only father, who gives him any measure of satisfaction, as to language; and, of him, he can only say that "he sometimes uses the term in its proper forensic sense." He adds expressly, "The fathers, in these times, commonly confounded it with sanctification, though," says he, "in substance, they held the true doctrine concerning it. Ambrose is, perhaps, more clear of mistake, in this respect, than most of them."

I need not point out to you, the obvious force of these words. Even Ambrose is but "perhaps more clear." But then, the substance of the true doctrine is, according to him, compatible with this supposed error.

Indeed, had he not thought so, what could he have done with his favourite St. Augustine? St. Augustine, in Mr. Milner's judgment, was a second St. Paul; raised, as it were, specially, to invigorate the Pentecostal leaven, when it had nearly become vapid: and yet he asserts of this father, exactly what the Eclectic Review ascribes to the Roman Catholic divines, at the Reformation. "Justification," says Mr. M., "must be involved in Augustine's divinity; and, doubtless, it savingly flourished in his heart, and in the hearts of many of his followers: yet the precise and accurate nature of the doctrine itself, seems not to have been understood by this holy man. He perpetually understands St. Paul's term, to justify, of inherent righteousness, as if it meant sanctification."

That matters did not alter, even through successive ages, appears from what Mr. M. tells of Grosse-teste, in the thirteenth century:—"Like most of the very best of divines, who wrote in those days," says he, "he knew not the just nature of the Christian article of justification, by Jesus Christ the righteous; and, though he appears to have trusted in Him for eternal salvation, and knew too well his own deficiencies to put any trust in himself, yet he evidently wanted the full assurance of understanding of the mystery of godliness, and could not, with his inefficacious religious views, have access with confidence, by the faith of Jesus." Once more, in the sixteenth century, when Mr. M. is just about to



enter on the Reformation, he expressly says, "The doctrine of justification, in its explicit form, had been lost, for many ages, to the Christian world."

As far as I have been able to examine, Mr. M.'s continued complaint is as well grounded, in point of fact, as it can be. Were I to question any part of his statement, it would be his allowances. I should deem it likely, that he imputes more of his own favourite orthodoxy to the ancients, than they were entitled to. For example, I should question the conclusiveness of a passage, which he quotes from Clemens Romanus, as "an unequivocal proof of the faith of the primitive church." That venerable father does, certainly, say, that the Old Testament saints ἐδοξάσθησαν καὶ ἐμεγαλύνθησαν, οὐ δι' αὐτῶν, ἢ τῶν ἔργων αὐτῶν, ἢ τῆς δικαιοπραγίας ἧς κατεργάσαντο· ἀλλὰ διὰ τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ. And then adds: Καὶ ἡμεῖς οὖν, διὰ θελήματος αὐτοῦ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ κληθέντες, οὐ δι' ἑαυτῶν δικαιούμεθα, οὐδὲ διὰ τῆς ἡμετέρας σοφίας, ἢ συνέσεως, ἢ εὐσεβείας, ἢ ἔργων ὧν κατεργασάμεθα ἐν ὁσιότητι καρδίας· ἀλλὰ διὰ τῆς πίστεως, δι' ἧς πάντας τοὺς ἀπ' αἰῶνος ὁ παντοκράτωρ Θεὸς ἐδικαίωσεν. Ὡς ἴστω ἡ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων. Ἀμήν.<sup>1</sup>

This, Mr. M. evidently relies upon, as quite to his purpose: but where is the proof that Clement meant to use, δικαιούμεθα (we are justified), and ἐδικαίωσεν (he hath justified), differently from St. Augustine? This, of course, Mr. M. firmly assumes; but, I think, too hastily: for this selfsame

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1 "Were glorified, and made great, not by themselves, or by their works, or by the rectitude of their conduct, but by His will. So, also, we, having been called, by His will, in Jesus Christ, are justified, not by ourselves, nor by our wisdom, or sagacity, or piety, or works which we have done in holiness of heart, but by faith, whereby Almighty God hath justified all from the beginning; to whom be glory, for ever, and ever. Amen."—*Epist. to the Corinthian Church*, § 32.

language is used, afterwards, by St. Basil ; for instance, in his Homily on Humility, where moral, and not merely forensic, justification, was self-evidently in view. But, looking merely at the words of Clement, I see nothing necessarily intimated, but that the spring and growth of spiritual life, are, essentially from God in Christ ; that God, through Christ, is the worker of all that is good in us, first and last, and that faith (the divine grace called by that name) is the instrumental medium, through which the Almighty Operator effects his blessed purposes in us. Do we need patience, meekness, tenderness of mind, disinterestedness, &c. ? He gives us increase of faith, that is, of spiritual perception and sensibility, through which divine things take a stronger hold on our minds and hearts ; and, in consequence of that attraction, we rise on a reinvigorated wing, and get above the storms of this lower world.

It strikes me, that the last part of the sentence must be thus understood, in right of its structure, and the terms contained in it. To say, that the Almighty God acts through a means, in whatever instance, conveys an idea, not of reckoning or reputed, but of the exerting of energy : that the verb *Δικαίωω* bears this efficient meaning, is proved by St. Paul's use of it in Rom. vi. 7. (a use, which, at least, shakes the determinateness of its meaning in some other places also). When, therefore, in the act in question, not only God is described as *παντοκράτωρ* (almighty), but an instrument, *δι' ἧς* (by which), is as it were, put into his hand, — are we not necessitated to regard the work wrought, as corresponding, to the preparation for it, to the instrument, and to the attribute, thus brought before us ?

I think it worth while to transcribe the passage

from Basil, as no two expressions can be more like each other. It begins thus: — Τοῦτο ὕψος ἀνθρώπου, τοῦτο δόξα καὶ μεγαλειότης, ἀληθῶς γινῶναι τὸ μέγα, καὶ τούτῳ προσφύεσθαι, καὶ δόξαν τὴν παρὰ τοῦ Κυρίου τῆς δόξης ἐπιζητεῖν.<sup>1</sup> Then, after quoting 1 Cor. i. 30, 31., he proceeds, Αὕτη γὰρ δὴ ἡ τελεία καὶ ὁλόκληρος καύχησις ἐν Θεῷ, ὅτε μήτε ἐπὶ δικαιοσύνῃ τις ἐπαίρεται τῇ ἑαυτοῦ, ἀλλ' ἔγνω μὲν ἐνδεῆ ὄντα ἑαυτὸν δικαιοσύνης ἀληθοῦς, πίστει δὲ μόνῃ τῇ εἰς Χριστὸν δεδικαιωμένον.<sup>2</sup>

Now, is not this, apparently, as much in support of Mr. M.'s forensic justification, as that in Clement? Yet, all that follows demonstrates, that inherent justification, was decidedly that which Basil meant to express. Had it been otherwise, honest Milner would have adduced the passage with triumph, instead of saying, as he does, that Basil's doctrine appears, from his works, to be too much clouded with self-righteous, and superstitious mixtures, to contribute materially to the instruction, and consolation, of sincere souls; though it is evident, (as Milner, with his accustomed integrity, adds,) "he revered the influences of the Holy Spirit, and placed his hope of salvation in Jesus Christ".

A few words more of this justly celebrated father, will best explain his actual meaning:—Ἐνταῦθα (*i. e.* in consequence of the afore-mentioned way of salvation,) πέπτωκε πᾶν ὕψος ὑπερηφανίας. Οὐδὲν ὑπολέλειπται σοι πρὸς ἀλαζονείαν, ὃ ἄνθρωπε, ὃ τὸ καύχημα καὶ ἡ ἐλπίς ἐν τῷ νεκρῶσαι μὲν πάντα τὰ ἑαυτοῦ θελήματα, ζῆσαι δὲ τὴν ἐν Χριστῷ ζωὴν τὴν μέλλουσαν, ἧς ἀπαρχὰς

<sup>1</sup> "This is the elevation, this the glory, and grandeur, of man, — truly to know the great matter, and to hold by it, firmly, and to seek after that glory, which comes from the Lord of Glory."

<sup>2</sup> "For this, in truth, is perfect and entire glorying in God, when a man is not lifted up, because of his own righteousness, but feels, that he stands in need of true righteousness, and that he has been justified, only, by the faith in Christ."

ἔχοντες ἤδη ἐν τούτοις ἐσμέν, τὸ ὅλον ἐν χάριτι ζῶντες καὶ δωρεᾷ Θεοῦ. Καὶ Θεὸς μὲν ἐστὶν ὁ ἐνεργῶν ἐν ἡμῖν καὶ τὸ δέλειν, καὶ τό ἐνεργεῖν, ὑπὲρ τῆς εὐδοκίας.<sup>1</sup>

In a word, nothing could be more fixed in Basil's mind and heart, than the doctrine of efficient justification, by faith alone, in the eternal Word, and nothing more perfectly out of his thoughts, than that interpretation of St. Paul, which Mr. M. was attached to, and which the Eclectic Review considers as the doctrine of the Reformers.

I am not sure, whether the prevalent and continuous view of the ancient church, (which Mr. M. considers as its great defect,) is better expanded anywhere, than in a passage of Irenæus; which, though clearly disfigured by the version in which alone we have it, is still abundantly intelligible. In showing what the Catholic Church has to oppose to the various heresies, he particularly enlarges on, "*eam, quæ secundum salutem hominis est, solitam operationem, quæ est in fide nostrâ: quam perceptam ab ecclesiâ custodimus, et quæ semper a Spiritu Dei, quasi in vase bono eximium quoddam depositum, juvenescens, et juvenescere faciens ipsum vas in quo est. Hoc enim ecclesiæ creditum est Dei munus, quemadmodum ad inspirationem plasmationi, (alluding, clearly, to the breath of life, breathed into new-made man; and implying, that faith is a like animating principle, in the*

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<sup>1</sup> "Here it is, that all the loftiness of pride falls to the ground. There is no room whatever for arrogance left to thee, O man, seeing that thy boasting\*, and thy hope, are in mortifying all the promptings of thine own will, and in seeking the life in Christ, which is to come; the first fruits of which we have, even now, in this present state, living entirely by grace, and the free gift of God. And, God it is, who worketh in us, both to will, and to do, of his good pleasure."  
—*Homily on Humility.*

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\* The reading of the Benedictine edition, *ζηῆσαι*, has been followed in the translation, as decidedly preferable to that of the Paris edition, of 1638; from which Mr. Knox appears to have made his quotation.

new creation ; ) ad hoc, ut omnia membra percipientia vivificentur : et in eo, (munere, *i. e.* fide,) disposita est communicatio Christi, id est Spiritus Sanctus, arrha incorruptelæ, et confirmatio fidei nostræ, et scala ascensionis ad Deum.”<sup>1</sup> — Lib. III. cap. xxiv. p. 222. Ed. Benedict.

You will understand, that, by these quotations, I do not aim at establishing the point itself, which they support (I mean, that, whatever may be my own opinion, that is not my present purpose). But, simply, I wish to show, that, to represent the moral idea of justification, as the characteristic of a particular party, at a particular time, is to make an unlearned statement ; that it is to assert that, which a very slight acquaintance with ecclesiastical antiquity enables one, at once to refute.

That the opposite opinion, was that of the German and Swiss reformers, is not to be denied. But that the Anglican Reformed Church new-modelled its theological creed, in this instance, by theirs, is a point, at least, not a little questionable. Our Liturgy cannot be adduced, in support of merely forensic justification. Because it is, substantially, the Liturgy of those who did not hold it. “The Church of England,” says Mr. Milner, “is not only indebted to Gregory the Great for the Litany ; but, by a comparison of our book of Common Prayer with his

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<sup>1</sup> “The ordinary operation connected with the salvation of man, which is in our faith : that faith, which was received by (or from) the Church, and is committed to our trust ; and which, like a precious deposit, in a goodly vessel, is always kept, by the Spirit of God, in full vigour itself, and imparting vigour to the vessel in which it is. For this gift of God, has been intrusted to the Church, (exactly as at the breathing the breath of life, into the body which He formed of the dust of the ground,) for this purpose, that all the members, by receiving it, may be made alive ; and, in this gift, is stored up, the fellowship with Christ ; *i. e.* the Holy Spirit, the earnest of our immortality, the confirmation of our faith, and the ladder, whereby we ascend to God.”

Sacramentary, it is evident, that almost all the collects for Sundays, and the principal Festivals, were taken out of it." Mr. M. adds these remarkable words:—"From the brief account I have given, it appears, that the service of the Church is far more ancient than the Roman Missal, properly speaking. It is impossible, indeed, to say, how early some parts of the Liturgy were written; but, doubtless, they are of very high antiquity." But, from this demonstration, will it not be a corollary, (according to all I have already quoted from Mr. M.,) that the Liturgy of the Church of England does not teach forensic justification, since it cannot teach, what its authors did not understand? I am aware of a fact mentioned by Mr. M., that our Reformers "scrupled not to introduce new prayers, into various parts of the Liturgy:" but it may be asserted, that these teach nothing different from the others; imitation, perhaps, in no instance, having been practised with more assiduity, or with more felicity.

But, do not the articles meet the wish of those, who have like zeal as Mr. Milner? I reply, (not dogmatically, but with that caution, which I feel the case calls for,) I doubt it. I must observe, that the supposed error of the fathers did not imply, that justification contained in it no reputative idea. They could not read the New Testament, without conviction, that though, in some instances, (as Rom. vi. 7., already quoted, and Rev. xxii. 11.,) it may demand, strictly, a moral interpretation; yet, it very often, and for the greater part, implies what God, in his gracious reckoning, esteems us to be, as well as that, which, by his almighty energy, he makes us to be. But, what Mr. M. would blame, was, that they united these two acts, making the reputative act

inseparably dependent on the efficient act ; as, when God, in creation, first, said, " Let there be light, and there was light ;" and then, he saw that " the light was good." Doubtless, of this strict connexion, a natural consequence was, that moral justification, rather than reputative justification, became the leading topic ; for, on the moral or efficient part, the whole business, self-evidently, turned.

Now, certain it is, that our 11th article puts forward the reputative idea : But is it, or is it not, subordinately to an understood moral justification, which precedes in order of nature ? I grant, the article emphatically excludes all human merit ; that is, all efficacy or value, of self-wrought performances : all merit, undoubtedly, is exclusively ascribed where it ought. But, is the reckoning, which God is there said to make of us, independent of his own work in us ? Is it independent of any root of true righteousness, already planted in our heart by the omnipotent grace of God ? I mean, is it so in the view of the article ? for it is to that point I confine myself.

I conceive, the reckoning is not meant to be independent of a previously wrought root of righteousness : because, it is not merely said, "*Tantum propter meritum Domini, &c., et non propter opera et merita nostra, justi coram Deo reputamur ;*"<sup>1</sup> but *per fidem* (by faith) comes in, as a qualification on our part ; without which, of course, the merit of Christ will not avail for us ; nor any such reckoning be made, on God's part, respecting us. That this must be the force of *per fidem* (by faith), connected, as it is, with *reputamur coram Deo* (we are accounted before God), is self-evident, for it could have place in

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<sup>1</sup> " Only for the merit of our Lord, and not for our own works and deservings, are we accounted righteous before God."

the statement of the reckoning, only by having place in the reckoning itself.

If other, almost any other, language had been used, this could not have necessarily followed. Had it, for instance, been said, simply, "We are justified by faith, only through the merit," &c. ; without adding, *coram Deo* (before God), then faith might have been understood as a medium, which instrumentally gave us, actual interest in the benefit, or satisfactory knowledge of it, without its being entitled to any valuation. But, when it is our justification before God,—our reputation in his omniscient mind, which is spoken of,—every instrumental use of faith ceases. If it comes in, it must be as a necessary qualification. Its admission would not be good sense, in any other construction.

What, then, is the faith, thus made necessary? The next Article informs us, by unequivocal intimation, that it is that "*vera et viva fides*" from which good works "*necessario profluunt, ut planè ex illis æquè viva fides cognosci possit, atque arbor ex fructu judicari.*"<sup>1</sup>

Does not this, then, in the strongest and fullest sense, describe faith as a root of righteousness, the seminal essence of *Δικαιοσύνη* (righteousness); and, when it comes at all into God's reckoning, must not the estimate accord with the fact? Being his own invaluable and exclusive work in us, must not the Divine idea, which directed the efficient act, equally direct the reputative act; and must not the Divine approbation of the work wrought, be in proportion to the correspondence of the work with the Divine idea? allowing every thing, however, for the ne-

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<sup>1</sup> That "true and lively faith," from which good works "do spring out necessarily, insomuch, that, by them, a lively faith may be as evidently known, as a tree discerned by the fruit." — Article xii.



cessary exercise of Divine condescension and indulgence.

It may be said, the article refers to the Homily, and the Homily speaks, apparently, a different language; for it asserts, that, though faith which justifieth, implies, "repentance, hope, love, dread, and the fear of God, to be joined with faith, in every man that is justified; yet, it shutteth them out from the office of justifying; so that, although they be all present together in him that is justified, yet they justify not altogether."

To this, I answer, that, neither here, nor elsewhere in the Homilies, is it the object to lay down theological definitions; but, rather, to furnish useful popular instruction. These words, therefore, cannot be intended to limit, the reckoning made in the mind of God; "for, who hath known the mind of the Lord," any further than he has declared it to us? And, where has he told us, that he does not value, every thing that is valuable in his creatures? Did his conduct to Cornelius, indicate any such thing!! But these words do, indeed, teach, what are to be our own thoughts, when we come to God for grace and mercy. We are not, even then, to overlook, what God's grace has really wrought in us. His work, as distinguished from our own works, we are to acknowledge with gratitude, and, as far as it is certain, with joy: for what surer pledge can we have, of the further mercies which we need? But, whatever can be, in any sense, called our work, even the exercise of the best, and most necessary graces of God's Spirit, (I say the exercise of them, to mark our part in them,) we are to throw out of view, either as bespeaking favour from God, or supplying, in any sense, the place of his continued work in us.

Every feeling of this sort, the Homily protests against. We are to come as weak, that we may be strengthened; as empty, that we may be filled; as having nothing to offer of ours, that we may rest solely on God's fulness of grace and mercy. The Homily certainly refers, here, in a special degree, to our first coming to God: but the Homily, which is then founded on absolute demerit and deficiency, will not be done away (though it may be refined and sublimated) by even what St. John has described, (i. 16.,) *ἐκ τοῦ πληρώματος αὐτοῦ ἡμεῖς πάντες ἐλάβομεν, καὶ χάριν ἀντὶ χάριτος.*<sup>1</sup>

Whatever strong expressions, of the humiliating kind, occur in this Homily, or in others, I hesitate not to say, must be thus understood; inasmuch as no human work contends more strenuously for the essential morality of faith, or more uniformly represents it as the vitality of holiness. Yet, most justly do they teach, that he, who approaches God's mercy-seat, is rather to annex such a high idea, to the degree of faith he looks for, than to that which he possesses; since the surest proof of his having vital faith already, will be, to be so intent on receiving more, as to be little satisfied with what he has, and, still less, with what it enables him to perform. To look wholly for what we need (for quickening or confirming grace — for light or consolation — for reception at the first, or for ampler blessings in the sequel) to the pure mercy of God in Christ, is what the Homily teaches; and it encourages us to expect, nay, it warrants us to confide, that, if we come cordially, neither our conscious emptiness, nor lamented unworthiness, shall defeat our suit. But, in all this, it is only teaching us, how we may get into

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<sup>1</sup> " And, of His fulness, have all we received, and grace for grace."

a state of grace. It is not telling us by what criteria, God judges us to be in a state of grace ; nor, on what grounds, we should so judge of ourselves.

This, I humbly conceive, is the main point, on which the Church of England itself, and many of those who deem themselves its only true members, look absolutely different ways. The question discussed in the Homily is, clearly and simply, How is a man to obtain the blessing of justification, when he seeks it at the first ; or when, through his frailty, or unfaithfulness, he needs a revival of it ? The answer is, He is to seek it, with sole recourse to God in Christ ; and to look wholly, off himself, to the Fountain of Grace and Mercy. But, he is to come, that he may be quickened ; and, when so quickened, he will be another man, in God's reckoning, and in his own conscious feeling : God will admit him into spiritual life, wholly for Christ's sake ; but he will esteem him spiritually alive, only in consequence of his own gift of living faith ; and he will make this living faith the exclusive test, because this alone is the vitalizing tie : every thing else lives by this ; but this lives through God alone — Father, Son, and Spirit. That, in the judgment of the Church of England, justification by faith embraces the whole of this, might be proved from the whole tenor of the First Book of Homilies ; and may be seen at once, on carefully considering the import of the 16th article. The evidences, from the Liturgy and Offices, would be innumerable.

But, as I said, the maintainers of an exclusively forensic justification, look quite another way. Making God's "acceptance of our persons" (as they have expressed it) independent of all moral qualification, and regarding his estimate of us, to depend as wholly

on an extrinsic ground, as his grant of mercy to us ; they make no distinction, between our grounds of comfort, when seeking justification, and when actually justified. The only difference, on their hypothesis, can be, that the selfsame facts are seen more obscurely, at first, and more clearly, afterward ; and, doubtless, if justification rested on no moral ground, they would be correct in their conclusion. If their establishment in the state in question, were independent of moral qualifications, their continuance in it, must be equally independent of them. There might be circumstantial reasons for attending to such qualifications ; but, it could hardly be shown, that there was any radical necessity.

But when, by Mr. Milner's own confession, all the fathers are of a different persuasion ; and when (if there be any force in the above observations) the Church of England gives no support ; it might not be inexpedient coolly to re-examine the question ; much, evidently, depending on it, both for the true understanding of God's word, and the effectual promotion of the Messiah's kingdom in the world.

It must, however, be granted, that expressions, now and then, occur in the Homilies, which seem more in unison with the moderns, than with the ancients. But, I conceive, the Church of England never intended the Homilies to be standards of her digested, and settled belief. A general approbation is given of them, in the 35th article ; but in such terms, merely, as would have been given, to any useful work, of a learned and pious individual. What proves that the Homilies are not to be regarded as authoritative, is, that, after the first draft, they never were corrected, though containing errors in opinion, which were afterwards renounced : for example,

in more places than one, they quote Ecclesiasticus and the Apocryphal Solomon, as the word of inspiration. If, therefore, a language is sometimes spoken, that savours more of Lutheranism, than of the ancient church, it proves, only, that the ear of the writer had caught some of the current expressions, or that his mind had received some of the popular notions, and that he felt himself at liberty to write as he thought; having, possibly, no suspicion that he was risking any censure from the friends of the Reformation.

But another matter-of-fact is no less apparent, — that the ruling principle, in drawing up the Homilies, was, not, by any means, to deviate from, but, on the contrary, to adhere steadily to, the ancient doctors of the Church. This design is so distinctly expressed, and so closely adhered to, as to afford evidence more than enough to outweigh casual, and, perhaps, unconscious dissonancies : for instance, let that homily, which treats most on justification (the homily of Salvation), be examined ; and it will be seen, that it was on the fathers, in subordination to the Scriptures alone, that every thing which is said was meant to be founded. In particular, the passage I transcribed from Basil is given, and eleven other fathers are referred to, as maintaining justification by faith. If, then, the Homilies are to be listened to in any thing, must it not be in such an appeal as this ? And, if so, with what consistency can the Homilies be relied on, as containing a view of this very subject, confessedly different from that of all the fathers ? Could honest, or reasonable men, solemnly resort to such a collective authority for support, on a point, respecting which they intended, at the very same time, to reject that authority, and adopt a new

doctrine, unknown to, and unthought of, by any of those luminaries? I ask, therefore, on the whole, can an exclusively forensic justification, —a justification, in which our reputative righteousness, in the view of God, is wholly independent of internal moral righteousness in ourselves,—be regarded as the doctrine either of the Liturgy, the Articles, or the Homilies of the Church of England?

I have gone into this subject, and have disclosed my own sentiments upon it, in a manner of which I had not the remotest intention, when I began to write. I might, however, still leave my meaning indefinite, if I did not add, that though, in my mind, the agreement between the Church of England and the fathers is as strict as it can be, respecting the state of justification, (both equally considering it, as I conceive, not merely, nor chiefly, relative, or reputative, but essentially moral and vital,)—the Church of England appears to me, without in any respect deviating from the line of the fathers, to have usefully and scripturally advanced onward, by recognising the reputative, as well as the efficient, part of justification; the approbation of the work wrought, as well as the operation which works it. I conceive what is said of justification, in the various parts of the New Testament, cannot be adequately understood, if both notions are not kept in view; nor, I should think, in almost any instance, can the term be rightly apprehended, if the one notion be not combined with the other.

The Church of England has, also, improved upon the fathers, in all it teaches respecting coming to God for mercy; a wholly gratuitous reception, being as indispensably preliminary to that gift of faith, which implants the vital germ of righteousness

in us ; as the implantation of that vital germ is, to our being reckoned righteous by him, whose judgments are always according to truth.

The Church of England, on the whole, then, has carefully retained and preserved, all the treasures of the ancients : she has weighed their gold in the balance of the sanctuary ; but she has not buried it in a napkin. She has traded with her five talents ; nor is the time of occupying yet over : she may, in the end, have ten talents to deliver to the great task-master. In the mean time, what equal instance have we of approach to that description of the mystical “ householder, who bringeth forth out of his treasures, things new and old ? ”

I must say a word or two to an objection, which is implied in what is said both by Mr. Milner, and the Eclectic Review ; namely, that, to suppose justification to have an efficient sense, as well as a reputative sense, is to confound it with sanctification.

This is a wonderfully common idea ; but I apprehend it rests on this pure mistake, that sanctification is a general term, for all inherent goodness wrought in us, by the grace of Christ. On the contrary, I am persuaded it is a *distinctive* term, for goodness grown into, or, at least, growing into, maturity ; and I humbly conceive, that, amongst all the preliminary knowledge, necessary to the beneficial reading of the Scripture, none is more important, than an accurate idea of this distinction, and of the weight attached to it.

The division of virtue into two degrees, was an established theory amongst the Jews. Bishop Taylor quotes the following words, as a saying common among the Rabbies : *Justitia proprie dicitur, in iis*

quæ jure facimus: benignitas in iis præter jus.<sup>1</sup> And St. Paul recognizes the distinction, when he says; μόλις γὰρ ὑπὲρ δικαίου τις ἀποθανεῖται, ὑπὲρ γὰρ τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ τάχα τις καὶ τολμᾷ ἀποθανεῖν. (Rom. v. 7.<sup>2</sup>)

But the like division was made of men without virtue, with equal exactness, and with greater variety of denomination. I think, on the virtuous side, the lower degree is uniformly Δίκαιος (righteous), and the higher degree, either Ἀγαθός (good), or Ἅγιος (holy); while, on the opposite side, we have Ἀσεβής (impious), and Ἀμαρτωλός (sinner), 1 Peter iv. 18. quoted from Prov. xi. 31. Septuag.; and also in Psalm i. 1. Sept. We have Ἀδικός (unrighteous), and Πονηρός (wicked), St. Matthew v. 45.; Ἀδικός (unrighteous), and, ῥυπῶν (filthy), Rev. xxii. 11.: and, not to pursue other varieties, which, probably, might be found, we have that remarkable distinction of St. Paul, which is, doubtless, made exactly on this classifying principle, οἱ καθεύδοντες νυκτὸς καὶ οἱ μεθύσκοι νυκτός. 1 Thess. v. 7.<sup>3</sup>

In two of the passages just referred to, we have a luminous exhibition of the entire classification, 1st. in that beautiful sentence of the sermon on the mount, ὅτι τὸν ἥλιον αὐτοῦ ἀνατέλλει ἐπὶ πονηροὺς καὶ ἀγαθοὺς, καὶ βρέχει ἐπὶ δικαίους καὶ ἀδίκους<sup>4</sup>; and, 2d, in a part of the concluding speech of our Saviour, in the Apocalypse (which was referred to above), ὁ ἀδικῶν ἀδικησάτω ἔτι, καὶ ὁ ῥυπῶν ῥυπωσάτω ἔτι, καὶ ὁ δίκαιος δικαιωθήτω ἔτι, καὶ ὁ ἅγιος ἁγιασθήτω ἔτι.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Justice is applied, properly, to those acts, which we are bound to do. Goodness, to those which are over and above what we are bound to do.

<sup>2</sup> For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

<sup>3</sup> They that sleep in the night, and they that are drunken in the night.

<sup>4</sup> For He maketh His sun to rise on the evil, and on the good; and sendeth rain on the just, and on the unjust.

<sup>5</sup> Rev. xxii. 11. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still.



The latter of these two passages, in particular, has its quaternion of members so adjusted to each other, even in sound, as to make it a sort of master-key to all the others. Nothing can be plainer, than that the first two terms, and the latter two terms, are, respectively, alike combined in genere, and alike distinguished in gradu (in degree), as well as in specie. It seems to me, therefore, to settle the point; and to mark the true differences between *justification* and *sanctification*. And, may I not add, that it throws a strong light on the preceding arguments? For, does it not imply, that, exactly as sanctification is the state of the holy, so justification is the state of the righteous?

I cannot quit these two passages, without observing, how exquisitely, in the former, our Saviour adjusts each power of nature, to each class of characters. The sun, to the higher class; the rain, to the lower: as if the righteous, or justified, needed to be made grow; but the good, or the sanctified, were to be ripened and exhilarated. And might we not pursue the analogy with wonderful success? for, in nature, both these operations are from the sun; the light directly from his orb, the rain indirectly from his influence, in raising the vapour; and, correspondently in the moral system, the word made flesh is full of grace, and truth; the first, (like the rain in the natural world,) to work as by a vegetative power; the second, beaming directly, like rays from their source, and supplying illumination, invigoration, and perfection, to capable recipients, in proportion to their capacity — *ἀγίασον αὐτοὺς ἐν τῇ Ἀληθείᾳ σου· ὁ λόγος ὁ σὸς Ἀλήθεια ἐστίν.*<sup>1</sup>

My observation on the latter passage, is merely,

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<sup>1</sup> St. John xvii. 17. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.

that the expressions, which belong to the evil class, strongly convey an active idea; while those which belong to the good class, no less emphatically describe passiveness, as if to mark, that man is the real author of his own woe, but that God, only, can be the author of his happiness.

I beg leave to make one more philological remark, not with reference to these passages, but the general subject. I wonder the continual use of the word Δικαιοσύνη (righteousness), where the subject of justification is treated of, has not led learned men to suspect the soundness of the merely forensic theory. I apprehend, that nothing could be more inapplicable, than a Greek noun ending in *οσύνη*, to a mere business of *reputation*, or *extrinsic change*. All such substantives seem to me, without exception, to express actual and personal habits, rooted in the mind, and manifested in the conduct; at least, the latter is implied invariably. I allow, a vulgar writer, in any language, might overlook such a nicety; but, to say nothing of that Divine superintendence, and that knowledge of tongues, which St. Paul had so abundantly from heaven, he was himself too excellent a critic, to have overlooked such a rule in language.

It is a curious fact, that St. Paul has evinced his critical exactness, in this identical instance. He says to Festus, Οὐ μαίνομαι, κράτιστε Φῆστε, ἀλλ' ἀληθείας καὶ σωφροσύνης ῥήματα ἀποφθέγγομαι.<sup>1</sup> But, when he expresses exactly the same idea, in 2 Tim. i. 7., Οὐ γὰρ ἔδωκεν ἡμῖν ὁ Θεὸς πνεῦμα δειλίας, ἀλλὰ δυνάμεως, καὶ ἀγάπης, καὶ σωφρονισμοῦ<sup>2</sup>, he uses

<sup>1</sup> Acts xxvi. 25. I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.

<sup>2</sup> For God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

not σωφροσύνη (the principle of sobriety), but σωφρο-  
νισμὸς (the act of being sober). Why? I presume,  
because he had already inserted the word Πνεῦμα  
(spirit), in the strict sense of *temper*, or *habit*  
(though not excluding, by implication, the Divine  
Spirit, whose fruit, all virtuous tempers are); and,  
consequently, to have used an additional term, which  
also signified temper or habit, would have implied a  
palpable solecism. To escape this, therefore, the  
Apostle had recourse to a word, which signified, not  
*the habit*, but the *abstract act*; and, by this means, he  
expresses his meaning, not with strength or clearness  
merely, but with absolute elegance.

It would be easy to show, that no writer in the  
world has attended more to accuracy of composition,  
or has laid greater stress on its effect. For example;  
let his nice varying of prepositions be remarked,  
where such variety was needful to indicate difference  
of circumstances: as in Rom. iii. 22., εἰς πάντας καὶ  
ἐπὶ πάντας. Εἰς πάντας (says the critical Bengelius),  
*Judæos*, qui sunt tanquam vas proprium: Ἐπὶ πάντας,  
*Gentiles*, qui sunt ut solum recipiens pluviam super-  
abundantem gratiæ.<sup>1</sup> Grotius equally feels St. Paul's  
intended precision, and gives a different, yet not op-  
posite, meaning: εἰς, *in*, significat justitiam illam *esse*  
*in* credentibus; ἐπὶ, *super*, etiam *apparere*.<sup>2</sup> In  
the last verse but one of the same chapter, St. Paul  
fixes his own idea of this varied use of prepositions,  
when he says, that the one God δικαιώσει περιτομῇν

<sup>1</sup> *Into all*, viz. Jewish believers, who are, in a certain sense, its peculiar vessel.  
*Upon all*, viz. Gentile converts, as on a soil, which receives the superabundance  
of the shower of grace.

<sup>2</sup> *Into*, signifies, that the righteousness, of which he speaks, *exists in* believers;  
*upon*, marks that it also *shows itself*.

*ἐκ πίστεως, καὶ ἀκρβυστίαν διὰ τῆς πίστεως.* Rom. iii. 30.<sup>1</sup>

Is it, then, credible, that St. Paul should be almost continually applying a word, which he uses oftener than any other single word whatever, and the real force of which he could not but know, in an unnatural and inadmissible sense? Especially when he had in readiness, the much more flexible word *Δικαίωσις* (justification); and actually uses it, at least, in two instances, where the sense obviously required it. We find him, also, probably from a like motive, sometimes using the word *Δικαίωμα* (just conduct), and, lastly, we actually often meet *Δικαιοσύνη* (righteousness) in his writings, where Mr. Milner himself would have allowed it could bear no other than its true moral meaning.

I have largely allowed, in the above paragraphs, that *Δικαίω* (to justify) means our being made just or righteous, in the opinions of others, as well as being made actually so, in ourselves. I have also meant fully to grant, that, St. Paul often gives a prominence to the former sense, when he ascribes the agency to God: and, indeed, I doubt not, but, in this case, it is always included. It is included in the fact, and it must, of course, be so in the mind of so just a thinker. But what I am impressed with, is, that our being reckoned righteous *coram Deo* (before God), always, and essentially, implies a substance of *Δικαιοσύνη* (righteousness), previously implanted in us; and that our reputative justification is the strict and inseparable result of this previous efficient moral justification. I mean, that the reckoning us righteous, indispensably presupposes an in-

<sup>1</sup> Will justify the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith.

ward reality of righteousness, on which this reckoning is founded.

In order to prove that St. Paul had this idea fixed in his mind, I will adduce two passages. First, 1 Cor. iv. 4., *οὐδὲν γὰρ ἑμαυτῷ σύνοιδα· ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐν τούτῳ δεδικαίωμαι· ὁ δὲ ἀνακρίνων με κύριός ἐστιν.*

I ask, on what ground does St. Paul here place his justification? Does he ever so directly intimate, that it does not hinge on his own integrity, but depends on a certain extrinsic provision, to which he is to look from himself for ultimate support against condemnation? If this had been in all his thoughts, this was the occasion for it to be manifested. The question related to his inmost and most essential welfare; his character in the Divine reckoning. Of his own innocence and uprightness, he is as conscious as he can be, — *οὐδὲν ἑμαυτῷ σύνοιδα* ("I am conscious to myself of nothing"); yet, says he, *οὐκ ἐν τούτῳ δεδικαίωμαι* (am I not hereby justified). Why? because it was not the true rule of judging? By no means, this is not once hinted at; but solely, because he himself was not the adequate judge, *ὁ δὲ ἀνακρίνων με κύριός ἐστιν* (he that judgeth me is the Lord). Implying, as clearly as language can imply, that, in order to his being really justified, he must possess integrity of heart in God's view, as well as in his own.

The other passage is that celebrated one, in Titus iii. 5. 6. 7., which has been so many times quoted, in support of the forensic hypothesis. I need not transcribe the whole; you will have the goodness to turn to it, and examine it for yourself; observe the first fact asserted, *οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων ἃν ἐποιήσαμεν ἡμεῖς.*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Not by works of righteousness, which we had done, but by His mercy, He saved us, &c.

How did he save us? Not by an imputative reckoning, but by a *παλιγγενεσία* (regeneration); not external only, but internal also: an outward sign; but with it, as the life and soul of it, an inward grace, *και ἀνακαινώσεως Πνεύματος ἁγίου* (and renewing of the Holy Ghost).

And he adds, that this renewing spirit is not scantily communicated. It is poured out upon us, *πλουσίως διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν* (abundantly through Jesus Christ, our Saviour). But to what end, *ἵνα δικαιωθέντες τῇ ἐκείνου χάριτι κληρονόμοι γενώμεθα, κ. τ. λ.*<sup>1</sup>

Can I add light or strength to this passage, by any reasoning? I do not feel that I can. The means and the end are so self-evidently united together, and the nature of the effect, in every such statement, is so necessarily fixed by the nature of its cause, that it seems to me as impossible to deprive *δικαιωθέντες* of a moral meaning, and of a proximate moral foundation, as of its etymological relationship to *δίκαιος* (just), or *δίκη* (justice).

It may be proper, having said so much on this subject (the tenth part of which I had no intention of saying, if I had even such a thought at all, when I took up my pen; it may be proper, I say), just to say a word or two in elucidation of a reference made above, to the 16th article of the Church of England.

I said, that a careful consideration of the import of this article, would shew, that, in the judgment of the Church of England, justification by faith contains in it the vitalization, which *vera et viva fides* (true and lively faith) produces in the subject; as well as the

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<sup>1</sup> That, being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs, according to the hope of eternal life.

reputation of righteousness, which follows *coram Deo* (before God).

The title of the article is, "Of sin after baptism." I do not take any pains to shew, that, in the language of the Church, baptism comprehends all the privileges belonging to a state of grace. Not on the erroneous ground, assumed by so many self-esteeming theologians in England, that these privileges, when mentioned in the catechism, or elsewhere, are to be understood, merely as a rhetorical synonyme for being baptized; but, because our Church follows the ancient Church, in believing, that God infallibly blesses his own ordinance, where he is not prevented, by moral indisposedness in the recipient; in which moral indisposedness, neither the ancient Church, nor ours, includes the natural imbecility of infancy. I need not trouble you with quotations from the fathers on this point; with whose judgment, I presume, you are, already, not unacquainted. But I will quote a few words, from the beginning of the Homily of Salvation. After stating, in the first paragraph, the perfect availableness of our Saviour's sacrifice, it begins the second thus: — "Insomuch that children, being baptized, and dying in their infancy, are, by this sacrifice, washed from their sins, brought to God's favour, and made his children, and inheritors of his kingdom of heaven;" and, accordingly, God is thanked, in the baptismal service, — charitably, in the case of adults, but absolutely, in the case of infants, — for having regenerated the child by the Holy Spirit, and for having received it as his own child by adoption.

It follows, then, that, in the judgment of the Church (ancient and Anglican), every one baptized in infancy, commences life in a justified state.

("Donec voluntatis usum," says St. Bernard, "et facultatem deliberandi renatus quisque recipiat, a charitate Dei separari omnino non potest. Securus interim degit sub protectione et advocacy Domini Dei sui." And that state is held to continue, until lost by deliberate, hence called deadly, sin; that is, sin which destroys the life of grace in the soul. Accordingly, in the article, baptism, receiving the Holy Ghost, and grace given, have the same virtual import, and equally mean, in this place, a state of grace, or a justified state. Most certain it is, that abstract admission into this state cannot depend on any pre-existing moral qualification<sup>2</sup>; else infants would not be admissible. But, the being in this state, essentially implies moral vitality; inasmuch as the loss of this state is moral death.

I am not arguing the matter; I am stating the doctrine of the Anglican Church. Therefore, what this moral vitality amounts to, in baptized infants, I am not called upon to conjecture. I venture only to assert, that the fact is taken for granted, both by all the fathers, and by our formularies; and that the doctrine of both, equally, is, that wilful, decided sin, is, as to this state, deadly. To "fall into sin," implies, "departure from grace given." And, as the once regenerate, or justified man, "may" thus "fall;" so, when fallen, he only "may" arise. He lost the grace of baptism, and the state of

<sup>1</sup> No regenerate person can, by any possibility, be severed from the love of God, before he has attained to the use of his will, and is capable of exercising moral deliberation. In the interval (between baptism, and his arrival at the years of discretion), he lives secure, beneath the protection and intercession of his Divine Saviour.

<sup>2</sup> My notion is, that God admits *by giving the qualification*; the qualification, therefore, constitutes the state; and, consequently, continuance in the state depends on retaining the qualification.



spiritual life and peace with God, by voluntary transgression ; and he can recover only, by true repentance, and amendment of life." I think I give, without colouring or distortion, the strict import of the article in question. What I have stated, flows from itself alone ; but might be largely confirmed and elucidated, by reference to the baptismal service and the catechism (the whole of which latter, proceeds on the charitable supposition, that the catechumen, through God's blessing on parental care, has not yet fallen into wilful sin, nor, of course, lost the life of grace, which baptism had communicated). I repeat, I am not entering into the defence of this Catholic doctrine ; I only assume it is taught ; and I ask, does not this, alone, imply all that has been said above, from fathers, or otherwise, and for ever preclude the maintaining, by any consistent churchman, of a merely forensic justification ? It is as clear as the day, that, in the view of our Church, justification is that which is lost by wilful sin ; for, if it were not, the term of deadly sin would be contradictory. But if it be lost by sin, it must be retained by holy watchfulness and steady obedience ; and, by inevitable consequence, the justified state itself must be, simply and essentially, in the judgment of the Church, a state of spiritual vitality, which, duly tended and cultivated, thrives and advances ; but which, when unguarded and neglected, wastes, withers, and dies. How completely this system sweeps away the merely forensic system, leaving it neither branch nor root, I need say no more to illustrate.

If the term of deadly sin should be thought questionable, and suspected to be a relic of the Roman Catholic theology, rather than a dictate of

truth, I merely beg, that reference may be had to St. James, i. 15., *ἡ ἐπιθυμία συλλαβοῦσα τίκτει ἁμαρτίαν, ἣ δὲ ἁμαρτία ἀποτελεσθεῖσα ἀποκύει θάνατον.*<sup>1</sup>

Here is, indisputably, a distinction implied, between sin inchoate, and sin perfected. And I submit, whether every rule of interpretation does not establish, that, what is exclusively predicated of sin perfected, cannot be attributed to sin inchoate. This latter, therefore, though sin, is not deadly sin. It is dangerous: it needs forgiveness; but, if it proceeds no farther, it is forgiven; since spiritual death (the great punishment) does not take place. Who, then, can say, after this plain declaration of Scripture, that the distinction between venial and mortal sin, is merely a Roman Catholic fiction?

Sir, I have now said all I could say, within the compass of a letter, on a subject which, I own, I deem of deep importance; but of which, you would not at this time, have had one word from me, had it not been for that article which I opened upon, in the Eclectic Review. All I have said tells you, that I do not follow the moderns, to the neglect of the ancients; and that I am not deterred from candidly examining, the countenance of a doctrine, by seeing its back marked with the terrible word, **POPERY**. “I have long learned,” says Richard Baxter, “to know, that Satan can use even the names of Popery and antichrist, against a truth.”

I acknowledge it to be my conviction, that no writer on this earth, is more misunderstood, or misrepresented, than St. Paul. I am, however, little less persuaded, that the misconception has had its use,—its important use;—and that the correction of

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<sup>1</sup> When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

it, where it has prevailed, would, at any earlier period than the present, have been impracticable, if attempted, and pernicious, if accomplished. It was needful for certain truths to be laid, as immoveable foundations, deep in human minds and habits; and, in order to this being fully done, a confinement of mind to the precise object, and, consequently, a shutting out of other objects from view, might be indispensable. This principle repeatedly occurs in the Gospel. "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." "To them that are without, all these things are done in parables." "We speak wisdom, among them that are perfect." "But I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal." If all this was necessary, in our Lord's own time, and in that of the apostles, must it not have been equally necessary since? Have there not been like varieties in human character? and may there not have been similar objects, to be accomplished in the church? I do not question, therefore, but that, unto the present hour, all has been, in such matters, exactly as, all things considered, it should have been; and that clearer light respecting those points, and many other points, might, had it come hitherto, have come prematurely.

But I cannot help thinking, that a new face of things, is, at this very day, opening upon us. Never, I conceive, before, was the power of reasoning so widely diffused, or so alertly exercised: even the religious world (as it is called) is beginning to reason, on its own favourite objects; and, though it has not yet allowed itself to animadvert on *doctrines*, it demurs, as to other matters, that are closely allied with them. For example, the Eclectic Review censures uncouth phrases; it hears the old puritanic

dialect with disrelish ; and it expresses a strong wish, that subjects of piety should be treated of, in the language of sensible, well-bred persons. I speak, here, wholly from memory, and therefore may express myself inaccurately ; but I think, remarks to this amount have been made. The Christian Observer also uses a freedom of its own, in questioning facts, or supposed facts, which the last generation of similarly good people, would have held in reverence. I refer you, for example, to the critique on "Cecil's Life of Newton." I am not censuring either the one procedure, or the other : all I say, is, the license thus taken, will not stop there. Habits are rapidly changing : a very few years bring in a new generation ; and daily experience shews, that the deepest dyed hue, parts with more and more of its tone, in every fresh transition. To give a standing colour to successive generations, is, self-evidently, not one of the living arts of this day ; and, therefore, what security is there, that the improving taste and growing freedom of thought, which are so clearly at work upon circumstantials, will not soon apply themselves to more hazardous investigations ? An increasing wish to be like the rest of the world, which a looker-on cannot but observe, will infallibly sharpen this spirit of inquiry ; there being some codes of belief, so much more congenial than others, to unfettered, fashionable, though still, it may be, decent intercourse with general society.<sup>1</sup>

I, therefore, greatly suspect, that the time is not very distant, when even theological creeds will be brought to a philosophical test, and be discarded, should they not stand the trial. At such a season,

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<sup>1</sup> There are some remarks of Mrs. Barbauld's, in her "Essay on Devotional Taste," so much in point to what I have just observed, that, wishing it to be at hand, I send a copy of it with this,

I own, I have little hope for those who are only acquainted with St. Paul, through the interpreting medium of Luther or Calvin, Dr. Owen or Mr. Romaine. Confident I am, they will awake, and wonder how they could have dreamed of man's chief hope, resting on any ground but that moral one, upon which our omniscient Lord himself has placed it, "*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God;*" or of a state of favour with God, existing, for one moment, independently of moral qualification. They will, I doubt not, at length discover this strange defect, in the present favourite systems; and should no sounder system have come within their view, what will follow, but lapse, by masses, into Socinianism or Deism?

On the principles which I have been led, I trust providentially, to embrace, I have nothing about which to be apprehensive. I do not believe with the moderns, and, therefore, am in no danger from their vacillation. It is, doubtless, no little comfort to me, that the Church of England (legitimately defined) seems so substantially to sanction my views; and it is a still greater comfort, that, if I know my own heart, my sentiments lead to no self-deception, no relaxing of self-discipline, no needless conformity to the world. I find, or think I find, the *quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est*<sup>1</sup>, an equally sure guide, both as to belief and practice; and, while I am in rational unison with this concurrent voice, I seem to myself to be, in some measure, within the citadel of that mystic city, whose outer court was left open to the treading down of the Gentiles, but whose central enclosure was to be fortified by an invisible but impassable barrier.

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<sup>1</sup> That which hath been believed in all places, at all times, by all the faithful.

Yet this would be poor consolation, if I had not happy prospects, for the world, as well as for myself. Yes, I earnestly hope, that the worst which can happen, will be only so much the more subservient, to the cause of eternal immutable truth. *Opinionum commenta delet dies ; judicia naturæ confirmat.*<sup>1</sup>

And assured I am, that, in God's good time, the real essentials of revealed truth, namely, the Trinity in Unity, the incarnation of the second Person, *verus Deus ex vero Deo* (very God of very God), and the influences of the co-eternal Spirit, as real as they are necessary in order to regeneration and sanctification (life and growth); these, I say, I am assured, will shine forth, to the eye of unsophisticated reason, with such bright evidence, as will abash opposition, silence cavil, satisfy doubt, and create settled, immoveable conviction. Then, and not before, I conceive, will the doctrinal admixtures, which have successively been employed, like loam about the junction of a graft, by Augustine, Calvin, Dr. Owen, Mr. Romaine, &c., be superseded; and truth and nature will be knit together, in perfect, indissoluble union.

I have only to add, that, when you have got to the end of this paper, you will oblige me by laying it where you will easily find it again; as I may possibly wish, myself, to recur to what I have now very rapidly reduced, for the first time, to writing.

Believe me, dear Sir,

With sincere respect,

Your very obedient servant,

ALEX. KNOX.

P.S. I am afraid there may be several incorrectnesses in this letter; but I must absolutely dispatch it without a revisal.

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<sup>1</sup> Time destroys the fictions of the imagination, and confirms the decisions of nature.

LETTER TO D. PARKEN, ESQ. ON THE CHARACTER OF  
MYSTICISM.

February 9. 1811.

MY DEAR SIR,

I HOPE you know before this, from Mr. Butterworth, that my apparent neglect of your letters, has not been wilful. I have been, and still am, in less perfect health, than for seven years preceding the last eight months. These, (from about May,) have been a season of continued indisposition, under one form or other; I thank God, seldom severe, and never, I believe, dangerous; but always such, as to make me feel very differently from what I used to do, in a more healthful time. I am now better, but cannot pronounce myself recovered.

This, I trust, will be my apology, for the inattention which I have seemed to show to your interesting letters. I had particularly promised to say something to you about *Brydayne*. I never forgot it; but my state of health induced me to put it off from time to time. I should, probably, now endeavour to redeem my pledge, did not your last letter, and kind present of Fénelon's life, call me to another subject.

I assure you, I duly esteem your solid testimonial, to the little faculty of thinking and writing, with which it has pleased God to intrust me. I say nothing about your over-rating it; because, in the judgment made by a kind and candid mind, (however discerning,) of another's talents, over-rating is unavoidable. All that is pleasant is seen, and will, of course, have its full praise; while all that gave consciousness of weakness, while the work was going

on, is out of view, and therefore occasions no drawback in the estimation. All this, however, remains in the recollection of the person himself; and, if he has common good sense, will make him hear with humility, what it would imply insensibility, not to hear with pleasure.

I must come, however, to the main point. What you propose respecting the Review, gives me some little feeling of pain; because I cannot give the answer which you wish. I have happened to be able to assist you in three instances; but it was the accidental fitness of the cases, which put it in my power. And, even as it was, I felt it an up-hill work. Reviewing is not my vocation. To read a book, so as to be able to review it, would be to me, at any time, an oppressive drudgery. And to cast my thoughts into that form, which is requisite for a Review, is to me (from whatever cause) peculiarly difficult. But that is not the worst of it. How very few subjects could I write on, without giving alarm to your honest readers. You yourself were fully sensible of my narrow escape, the last time. And another attempt could hardly fail to verify the proverb, "The farther in, the deeper."

The truth is, it could not be otherwise. Your Review has taken its ground, and avows its character. It is self-evidently calvinistic and puritanic. Moderately, beyond a doubt; as much so, perhaps, as it could be, consistently with retaining those characters at all. Still, these are its properties. Now *I* am of another species. My sentiments, both theological and ecclesiastical, are not merely dissimilar; in many respects, they are adverse. And, in me, these sentiments are, perhaps more than in most others, habitually influential. They enter, more or



less, into all the movements of my mind; and to keep them back, would be doing violence to my nature. But, what I make much more account of, it would be doing injury to my general notion of truth. In a word, I must either walk in fetters, (which I never can do,) or your review would be, like Caliban, a pretty kind of monster with two voices.

For your own sake, therefore, as well as for mine, I say, do not ask, nor expect aid from me. The case involves a moral impossibility; were it otherwise, your kind earnestness would draw forth a different answer.

As, however, you are pleased to value my thoughts, as a private communication; I cannot omit saying something on the point, which your letter brings before me. Fénelon has been, if I mistake not, the greatest favourite with Protestants, that his church has produced. The most rigid in pronouncing general fulminations, when Fénelon is named, abate somewhat of their wonted sternness. The *Christian Observer*, for example, has moderated even its accustomed anti-papistical tone, to do honour, (like the Duke of Marlborough, heretofore,) to this fascinating individual.

These, I own, are not quite my feelings. I see much in Fénelon to admire and love. He had a fine classical taste, and his piety was pure and exalted. But I cannot relish either his intellectual, or religious peculiarities. It is the tendency of some minds to contemplate moral truth abstractedly, as it is in itself; and, for the purpose of doing so more perfectly, to withdraw their thoughts and feelings, as much as possible, from the influences of animal nature. Others, on the contrary, think, that we are

to employ our whole minds on religion, the more sensitive part, as well as the more rational part ; and that, in doing so, we shall be likeliest to fulfil the purpose of Him, who is the Author of our entire nature ; who, we may believe, fitted revealed religion to it, and it to religion ; and who has encouraged us to expect his sanctifying grace, in every part of our nature ; not "the spirit," merely, but also the "soul, and the body."

These two different tendencies, lead, of course, to proportionately different methods. The person of abstracted habits, endeavours to fix not only his heart, but his whole mind, on the Divine Essence ; and, rates his spiritual advancement, by the increasing concentration of all his mental powers, on the one great object. The person, of more enlarged tendencies, is solicitous to have his heart settled on the Supreme Good ; but this grand point being secured, he gives a range to his mind, commensurate to the works of Him whom he adores. Convinced, that knowledge is the food of love, and, that knowledge of God, is, (at least, by embodied intelligences,) to be sought for in the works of God, he seeks the pabulum of his love, wherever God has wrought, whether in the way of nature, of Providence, or of grace ; and, looking on each portion with a divinely illuminated eye, he derives from each, the instruction it is fitted to convey, while he becomes more and more capable of apprehending that harmony, which unites the whole, into one grand manifestation of the power, the wisdom, and the goodness of the Almighty.

I think, I do no injustice to modern mystics, in general, and to Fénelon, in particular, in classing them with the first description. When I read any

of them, and, not least, Fénelon, I seem to be, as it were, on an alpine height, with the light of Heaven above and around me, but one uniform mist below me. If I can enjoy light alone, it is well; but human nature is made for other impressions. Surely, "light is sweet;" but, to be continuously so, it must be reflected on us by surrounding objects. As Adam is made to say in Milton,

" Pleasant the sun,  
When first on this delightful land, he spreads  
His orient beams, on herb, tree, fruit, and flower ;"

Just so, when I accompany the enlarged observer of natural, providential, and evangelical facts, I seem to have exchanged the bright waste of light, for the illuminated landscape. The light itself is as sublimely glorious as ever; but every variegated object, which I now see by means of it, not only multiplies my pleasures, but enhances my value for the light itself as giving me accumulated evidence of its worth. Before, I was dazzled and astonished; but a second look, though still dazzling, gave nothing new. The delight, therefore, of the first impression, could not be equally tasted again. Now, it is otherwise; every object which I see, is, in some respect, a new modification of the light itself. It is light, in a new form; for, were the light wanting, all would be darkness.

What is creation, Providence, and the Gospel scheme, but an embodied manifestation of the three correspondent attributes of Deity, — power, wisdom, and goodness? And what is the harmonic whole, but the sphere, and growing kingdom, of embodied Godhead? One leading purpose of this great mysterious plan, we are told, is *ἵνα γνωρισθῇ ταῖς ἀρχαῖς*

καὶ ταῖς ἐξουσίαις ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις, διὰ τῆς ἐκκλησίας,  
ἡ πολυποίκιλος σοφία τοῦ Θεοῦ.<sup>1</sup>

Is it not then, still more, the appropriate duty of man, to employ his mind on this exquisite display, in order that he may receive fresh beams of Divine knowledge, from these mirrors of God's own preparation? I allow that, before this can be done, "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, must shine into our hearts;" for, until then, we shall understand nothing; as St. Paul says, of the Jews, "the veil" shall be "on our hearts." But, assuredly,

"Not so the mind that has been touch'd from Heaven,  
And, in the school of sacred wisdom, taught  
To read his wonders, in whose thought, the world,  
Fair as it is, existed ere it was."

Nor is it in nature, only, that such a mind discerns

"A ray of heavenly light, gilding all forms."

Providence, still more clearly, and still more majestically, shows God's glory, and displays his handy-work; and that, not merely, nor chiefly, as it guides and guards individuals, but, as it manages the great commonwealth of human society, in subservience to the "little stone" becoming a mountain, which shall fill the earth; and the leaven, leavening the whole three measures of meal; for, says Mr. Edwards, "God, doubtless, is pursuing some design, and carrying on some scheme, in the various changes and revolutions, which, from age to age, have come to pass in the world." There is some great design, to which Providence subordinates all the successive

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<sup>1</sup> Ephes. iii. 10. To the intent that, unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be made known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God.

changes, in the affairs of the world. And it is reasonable to suppose, that all revolutions, from the beginning of the world, are but the various parts of the same scheme, all conspiring to bring to pass, what the great Creator and Governor of the world has ultimately in view."

Now, my great charge against the mystics, is, that they withdraw the mind from the study of God in these, his appointed ways; and seek to engage it in that direct and immediate contemplation, which, from that text in Ephesians, already quoted, would scarcely seem to be a fit method for angelic beings. I allow, that Fénelon did not wholly overlook the visible works of God. His fine taste bound him, by too many ties, to natural sublimity and beauty, to admit of a perfect mystical enfranchisement; still his religion seems to have little connection with facts, whether evangelical or providential; at least, very imperfectly with the former, and scarcely, if at all, with the latter. And, as it does not rest on facts, so neither does it greatly tend to facts. The state of mind which is aimed at, is much more likely to be imagined than realised. There is much to engage weak, and fanciful minds, in vague pursuit, but scarcely any thing to induce rational and solid tranquillity.

The laws of our nature appear to admit of much more directness, in our love, than in our knowledge, of God. There seems to be implanted in us a distinct and radical faculty, for the purpose of Divine love; while our notions of Deity grow up in us, like all other analogous notions. This loving faculty, has been (by Hartley at least) named *theopathy*; and, while its misdirection constitutes the chief misery of sinful man, it is, to the good, the life of their life;

interested love could never be satisfied, with forming simple acts in prayer, without any variety of interested notions. It could never be satisfied with doing acts, of which it should never render any evidence to itself. Contemplation," he adds, "consists in acts so simple, so direct, so peaceable, so uniform, that they have no characters by which a soul may distinguish them."

It is, consequently, with good reason, that the mystic describes the highest attainment of the soul, as consisting in holy indifference, self-abandonment, and self-annihilation. For, constituted as we are, we cannot have rational consolation, without rational thought; and we cannot exercise rational thought, without "distinct and nameable ideas." It is implied in this theory, that progress in Christian graces is not to be solicitously looked for; as this would give that "*evidence*," which the highest acts of the soul are not fitted to furnish; and it would be to maintain that recollection of *self*, which it belongs to perfection to relinquish. But I conceive there may be another reason, not less strong; viz. that the contemplation of the mystic, has no tendency to spiritual advancement. It is, in itself, confessedly stagnant, as containing no distinct acts, no perceivable ideas. Nothing, in short, of which the mind can give account to itself; consequently, there can be no marked progress; no sensible growth; the faculties, as far as God and religion are concerned, seem to be in a kind of serene slumber, in which, bright, but indistinct visions are enjoyed, but in a way, much more different from all natural mental perception, than dreams are different, from waking thoughts and feelings.

I conceive the best that can be said of all this, is,

that it may be suitable to certain minds, which are cast in a peculiar mould; and, therefore, succeed best with a peculiar guidance. As I doubt not, however, that the existence of such a species, in human character, has been wisely permitted, so I rest confident, that the mystical method of piety answers, not only the particular purpose of its own votaries, but subserves some further end, in the great economy of the Messiah's kingdom. But I do not see what more can be said in its favour. For what can be less adapted to the general character of our nature? The mind is naturally active; and, that it may follow its nature in this respect, it is endowed with variety of faculties, tastes, and affections. The mystical method professes to make us perfect, by unnaturalizing us; by first separating the mind itself, from its attendant train of powers; and then consigning it to a happy inactivity, somewhat like that, which the Epicureans allotted to their gods.

As I said, some minds may fall in with this, and find it, perhaps, their proper element; but, if I do not greatly err, the most healthful, and best formed minds, would least relish it; or rather, in proportion as they are healthful and well formed, would find it physically, as well as morally, impossible to adopt it.

As mysticism proceeds on the principle not of engaging and employing, but of suppressing and annihilating, our natural tastes and feelings, the thorough-paced mystic might find, in this contrariety to human nature, an argument in favour of his system, instead of an objection to its truth. I have only to express my joy, that no such argument can be adduced in favour of Christianity. There is not, in the Divine account of this dispensation of infinite

wisdom and goodness, one word about holy indifference, or self-annihilation. The eight beatitudes, which our Lord has placed as the foundation of his moral system, speak an opposite language, and proceed on an opposite principle. We are, doubtless, to deny ourselves. But why? that, by doing so, we may be saved from injuring ourselves; and may ensure our solid, growing, and, at length, consummate, gratification. Christianity indispensably requires, a dominion of our spirit, over our animal nature. But it makes no attempt to separate the former from the latter. On the contrary, its special design is to separate the animal soul (the ψυχή), from its native, and, too generally, aggravated enthrallment, to the flesh, the world, and the devil; and to transform its various powers and feelings, into so many springs and movements of virtue and happiness. Whether this could be done, might have been a problem, which angels, beforehand, would not have ventured to resolve. But, in proportion to its difficulty, we may dare to believe, it was worthy of Him who undertook it.

And how exquisitely suitable was the method adopted? The incarnation. — Animal nature was to be magnetized; to make the attraction infallible, Godhead takes our animal nature, in its noblest and happiest form, into a personal union; and, in that union, submits to, and combines, every conceivable circumstance, that could tend to modify the moral energies of Deity, into the most powerful medicine, and the most invigorating food, for diseased and destitute man. God, in Himself, could be the object of those faculties only, which belong to our purely spiritual nature; and to these, but in a limited measure, and under the greatest disadvantages.



To most men, from predominant animality, such an apprehension would be uncongenial; and in whom could it have been so clear and powerful, as to have steadily counteracted the numberless subtle fascinations, as well as gigantic assaults, which we are daily liable to, in this mortal sphere? But what feeling, what susceptibility, what attractable or penetrable point, in even our sensitive soul, does "*God, manifest in the flesh,*" leave without its provision? St. Bernard speaks well; and yet he goes but a little way, when he says, "*Ego hanc arbitror præcipuam invisibili Deo fuisse causam, quod voluit in carne videri, et cum hominibus homo conversari: ut carnalium videlicet qui nisi carnaliter amare non poterant, cunctas primo ad suæ carnis amorem affectiones retraheret, atque ita gradatim ad amorem perduceret spirituales.*"<sup>1</sup>

Can Christianity, then, be made to consist, in suppressing and annihilating, what its leading feature so astonishingly provides for? Doubtless we are, above all other aims, to recognize Deity, in the manifestation thus made to us: — "*Nec sic parvuli sunt lactandi,*" says St. Augustine, "*ut semper non intelligant Deum Christum;*" but he adds, "*nec sic ablactandi, ut deserant hominem Christum; Christus autem crucifixus, et lac sugentibus, et cibus proficientibus.*"<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I look upon this as the chief reason, for which the invisible God was pleased to make himself visible in the flesh, and, as a man to mix among men; namely, that he might, in the first instance, draw off to the love of himself manifest in the flesh, all the affections of those creatures in the flesh, who were incapable of love for any other than a fleshly object; and thus, by degrees, carry them on to a spiritual love.

<sup>2</sup> Even the feeding babes with milk must be so managed, that they be not left always, without the knowledge of the Godhead of Christ \* \* \* \*; as also in their weaning, care must be taken, that they forsake not the manhood of Christ. It is, however, Christ crucified, that is both milk for the suckling, and meat for the advanced believer.

Evidently, therefore, we are not to suppress, much less extinguish, those powers and sensibilities, to which this adorable object is adapted ; and, of consequence, without which it cannot be adequately apprehended. The *flesh*, we are indeed, to *crucify* ; and to mortify those “ members which are upon the earth.” But what are *these* ? not animated feeling, not accurate taste, not vivid discernment of whatever is worth discerning, or just appreciation of whatever is worth being appreciated, on natural or moral, civil or religious, grounds. No, the enumeration which follows the injunction, contains vices, and vices alone. *These* we are to extirpate ; Christianity, here spares neither root nor branch. But, that our efforts may be effectual, let them be confined to their just object ; let us not mispend our strength, on what we cannot eradicate, nor can even weaken, without counteracting the general plan of Divine Wisdom. The objects which the Gospels place before us, must be imperfectly viewed, in proportion as the mind becomes, in any respect, dulled or blunted. Imagination, taste, judgment, skill in character, sensibility, whether moral or intellectual, all have work provided for them, in this first of studies ; since He, who, as man, exquisitely combined them all, in himself, can be adequately contemplated, only by such minds, as approach nearest his own human mind, in talent and disposition. He has condescended to adapt himself, generally, to all minds ; but those minds will see most, in him, which are themselves most congenial to his mind. What escapes others, will convey to these, deep delight, and invaluable instruction. I grant, that what the best taste, and the best talents could do, in this matter, would (as St. Paul has said of other similar advantages) be nothing without love :

but this grace being once fixed in the centre of the soul, each natural and acquired endowment becomes illumined by it, as the planets by the sun; and, from henceforth, as a faithful attendant, is ever waiting its commands, and serving its purposes. Mysticism, therefore, I conceive to be hostile to Christianity, because it necessarily disqualifies the mind, for that distinct and intelligent contemplation of IMMANUEL, to which we are called by all and every trait, however minute, of the evangelic records. I will not say, that mysticism intentionally turns the mental eye away from this object; at least, Fénelon had not any such design: but it, self-evidently, unfits the faculties of the mind, for every such employment. By engaging its votaries in that contemplation of Deity, to which the embodied spirit is unequal, and in which, it should seem, even angels are not occupied, it creates in them, both a disrelish, and an incapacity, for that view of Deity, which, we might humbly dare to say, the deepest wisdom of God has been exerted to furnish.

That every subordinate part of the Divine scheme, should be in perfect accordance with its first and grandest feature, would be natural to conclude. That the fact is actually so, we have luminous evidence, in every page of the Bible. Let us open this wonderful book where we may, we meet no mystical abstraction. We feel *our whole mind* to be addressed at once; no faculty, active or passive, being left without its provision. Human nature is every where made to furnish the machinery, which may work most effectually on itself. To withdraw the mind from sensible ideas, while reading the Bible, is absolutely impossible. It places real life before us, in all its most interesting, and most im-

pressive forms ; and obliges us to converse with "men of like passions with ourselves," even while it is teaching us "the way of God" most "perfectly."

Instead of abstracting us from the world, it makes it a school of wisdom to us ; and teaches us, by example as well as precept, to proceed in making it so, daily, to ourselves. We discover, that, while it is the scene of the devil's temptations, it is also the scene of God's providence ; and that, as, on the former account, we must be ever vigilant against its seductions, so, on the latter account, we cannot but be deeply interested in its various movements, past, present, and future. To be regardless of these, would be to overlook the volume of prophecy, as well as that kingdom of the Messiah upon earth, of whose gradual advancement, the prophetic oracles chiefly treat, and in whose final triumph, all their brightest rays centre. It is not, therefore, a mystical escape from the world, to which the Christian is called. His vocation is much more glorious : he is to keep himself unspotted from the world ; but he is to remain in it, that he may maintain, as far as in him lies, his Lord's right to it, and promote his interest in it. He is taught this, by the Redeemer's last prayer for his followers : "I pray *not* that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." And he is still more fully instructed by our Lord's own example ; who made every walk of human life the scene of his beneficence, and turned every object and occurrence, into a means of the most interesting and deepest instruction.

Had the Bible been intended to teach mystical piety, it would, doubtless, have had something of the manner of mystical writers. But what can be

more unlike, both in manner and matter? I wonder the worthy Fénelon (who was so excellent a philologist) was not struck with this dissimilarity. I wonder he did not remark, that the lessons of truth, in both Testaments, are, in every instance where the case admits of it, made luminous, as well as attractive, by illustrations from nature and common life; while he might have observed, that, notwithstanding the command of imagery manifested in *Telemachus*, a figure rarely makes its way into any part of the *Œuvres Spirituelles*. I believe the same observation may be made of most of the thoroughly mystic writers; and I cannot help thinking, that, putting the divine authority of the Scripture, for a moment, out of our view, that notion, which has suggested to the mind of the conceiver, apt illustrations of itself from nature and common life, carries with it a *prima facie* evidence of its truth, which the matter that suggests no such illustrations, does not afford. The capability of being elucidated, by comparison with facts actually existing, implies a generic congruity with the laws of nature; and the more obviously apt the comparison, or the more striking the figure, the more is this congruity felt by us: on the other hand, that notion, which finds no drapery to fit it in the wardrobe of nature, cannot but be suspected not to belong to nature's family.

This remark might be enlarged upon. Our Saviour's manner, I will not say in his exquisite parables, for these are, probably, a peculiar species of composition, fitted to the single occasion, but in the Sermon on the Mount, might be compared with any of Fénelon's Spiritual Letters. The thinking mind must feel, that the teaching of our Lord, goes not beyond the accustomed range of human thought;

nor leaves the ground, marked, as it were, by the footsteps of human experience. All is intelligible, and all is, at least, probable; because it harmonizes with what is daily witnessed. Were the guide not known, he may be trusted, because he leads into no unfrequented path. But where do we find ourselves with the good Fénelon? One might almost say, in a dreary waste: where no path leads us onward; no trace of man, no living thing, nor even tree, nor green herb, meets the eye, nor cheering sound the the ear. We are beyond the verge of creation and Providence; and abstract, bare belief in God's infinite essence, is all which remains to tell us that we are yet in his empire.

I doubt whether I have not, here, without particularly intending it, come upon the truest definition of mystical perfection: for if, as Fénelon says, "contemplation consists in acts so simple, so direct, so peaceable, so uniform, that *they have* NO CHARACTERS *by which a soul may distinguish them,*" what can the habit, thus described, be with certainty made to consist in, but bare abstract belief in God's infinite essence?

Undoubtedly, Fénelon labours, in his *Maxims of the Saints*, to guard against this conclusion. While he asserts, that pure contemplation "passes over every thing that is sensible and distinct, that is comprehensible and limited; and that it stops only in a purely immaterial idea, which has not passed through the senses, or by the imagination;" he still allows, this same contemplation "may have for distinct objects, all the attributes of God, and the three Divine Persons:" nor does it even "exclude the distinct sight of the humanity of Jesus Christ, and all his mysteries; because, adds he, "pure con-

templation admits of other ideas, with that of the Divinity: it admits of all the objects which pure faith can set before us: it excludes nothing in divine things, but sensible images, and discursive operations."

But is not all this, very like saying, and unsaying, in the same breath? How even the attributes of God could be distinctly contemplated, without aid from some ideas, which had passed through the senses, and were stored up in the imagination, I cannot comprehend. The very terms by which the Divine attributes are expressed, necessarily refer the mind to things sensible and comprehensible. Our thought, therefore, must centre itself in these, however it may look round on what is illimitable, τὰ γὰρ ἀόρατα αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ κτίσεως κόσμου, τοῖς ποιήμασι νοούμενα, καθαροῦται, ἥτε αἰδῖος αὐτοῦ δύναμις καὶ θεϊότης.<sup>1</sup>

But, were this disputable, there still would be no possible question about what follows; namely, the "distinct sight of the humanity of Jesus Christ:" how this could be, without sensible images, is a mystery, which mysticism only can unravel.

The fact is, that Fénelon, in writing that celebrated little book, was solicitous to make out a good case for his client. He meant to say nothing but what was true; but he derives evidence from his own singular notions, rather than from the natural bearing of the mystical scheme. His particular object was, to explain those central principles of mysticism, to which he was so much attached, (viz. self-oblivion, and abstraction from sense,) in such a manner, as to rebut the charges, to which certain extravagant, and, per-

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<sup>1</sup> For the invisible things of Him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made; even his eternal power and godhead.—Rom. i. 20.

haps, immoral mystics, had exposed them; and to prove their agreement with what had been held, by leading doctors of the Catholic Church. The admissions of the real nature of mysticism, we, of course, may rely upon; but the qualifying statements are to be more cautiously received; the special view with which they are given must be allowed for; and, at all events, we must judge for ourselves, whether the case admits of such qualifications.

But another question occurs: Did Fénelon, in his own future habits, exemplify that attention to "distinct objects of faith," which he states to be, at least, a possible accompaniment of "pure contemplation" of the Divine Essence? His letters do not show that he did: on matters of detail, they contain observations, which are often sensible and interesting; but, considering the talents of the writer, they are astonishingly monotonous. The grand topic is, that unfortunate *MOI-MÊME*, who is the cause of all the mischiefs that are complained of. "*Le moi*," says he, "*est le grand séducteur; il séduit plus que le serpent séducteur d'Eve.*" Again, "*C'est dans l'oubli du moi qu'habite la paix. Partout où le moi entre, il met le cœur en convulsion; et il n'y a point de bon antidote contre ce venin subtil. Heureux qui se livre à Dieu, sans réserve, sans retour, sans songer qu'il se livre.*"<sup>1</sup>

It was certain, however, that *moi-même* could not be killed; and, therefore, what prevails in most of the letters, seems little more than a continued

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<sup>1</sup> Self is the great seducer, greater than the serpent which seduced Eve. It is in forgetfulness of self, that peace consists. Wherever self enters, it throws the heart into convulsions, and there is no good antidote for this subtle poison. Happy the man who surrenders himself to God, without reserve, without regret, without even reflecting that he is surrendering himself!



lullaby, to keep *moi-même* asleep. I mean not to be severe: but think, I pray you, of these words: “sans songer qu’il se livre.” (without even reflecting that he is surrendering himself.) Is not this single sentence, a dose of theological opium?

I am sure that, in Fénelon, these notions found many inextinguishable correctives. His heart could not be injured by them; but his *mind* must have suffered, especially on the first and best of subjects. How differently would he have written, had he been less prejudiced against *MOI-MÊME*; but, as it is, I am sorry to say, that the Christian religion could scarcely be held forth to less advantage, by any of its sincere votaries, than by Fénelon, in his *Spiritual Letters*.

But, if the ripe fruits of mysticism could not be produced in Fénelon, through the salutary counter-action of his better nature, we may find them, elsewhere, marked so clearly, as not to be mistaken. We are compelled to doubt, whether Fénelon is always to be taken *au pied de la lettre*; and whether some harmless meaning may not fairly be put on his strange expressions. But we cannot admit such questions, in the case of William Law. In his last tract, published after his death, we have mysticism full grown. He is writing against *John Wesley’s* view of *regeneration*; in which, it must be granted, matter for animadversion was not wanting. But Law’s counter-statements are extraordinary. The tract is small; and it will be worth your while to procure it. It would be difficult to make satisfactory quotations; the sense running on, in close order, from paragraph to paragraph. Page 72, he tells us, that our reason, or the “*rational man*” in us, is that very individual old man, with his deeds, that we are, by

the religion of the Gospel, to be saved and delivered from ; and page 73., that the occasion why persons of great piety and devotion have fallen into great delusions, was, because they made a saint of the natural man. “ My meaning,” says he, “ is, they considered *their whole nature* as the subject of religion and divine graces ; and, therefore, their religion was according to the workings of their *whole nature* ; and the old man was as busy, and as much delighted, as the new.” How mistaken, then, was St. Paul, when he prayed for the Thessalonians : *αὐτοὺς δὲ ὁ Θεὸς τῆς εἰρήνης ἀγιάσαι ὑμᾶς ὁλοτελεῖς καὶ ὁλόκληρον ὑμῶν, &c.* I. Thessal. v. 23. ; and, still more, when he adds so confidently, *πιστὸς ὁ καλῶν ὑμᾶς, ὃς καὶ ποιήσει.*<sup>1</sup>

But observe what this doctrine might be drawn to : if our whole nature is not the subject of religion and divine graces, neither, in the nature of things, can be our whole conduct : whatever is strictly natural to us, will, ordinarily, have its proportionate share in our active movements ; therefore, if a part of our radical nature remains wholly unsanctified, it is to be looked for, that parts of our common conduct should, at least occasionally, be wholly unsanctified also : and, should this prove the case, it need not greatly alarm us ; for, if the truth of religion may consist with some things wholly unsanctified within, it may equally consist with those wholly unsanctified principles appearing sometimes without ; to be at once regenerate, and wholly unregenerate, in different respects, externally, being no more a contradiction,

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<sup>1</sup> And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly ; and I pray God, your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless, unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it.

than the being regenerate, and wholly unregenerate, in different respects, at the same time, internally.

I do not charge this consequence on Mr. Law: I only say, his scheme might lead to it; and, I believe, actually has led to it. At least, if this persuasion arose, it would not be checked by what Mr. Law asserts, page 91. "To know no more, and to seek no more, of our salvation, than we can know by an implicit faith, and absolute resignation of ourselves to God in Christ Jesus, is the true saving knowledge of Christ, and such as keeps us in the highest degree of fitness to receive our perfect salvation."

"There is not," says Mr. Law, page 98, "the smallest degree of evil in us, but what arises from this selfishness; because we are thus all in all to ourselves."

"It is this self, that our Saviour calls upon us to deny: all other sacrifices are but small matters, compared to that sacrifice and destruction of all selfishness, as well spiritual as natural, that must be made, before our regeneration hath its perfect work."

"There is a denial of our own will, and certain degrees even of self-denying virtues, which yet give no disturbance to this selfishness. To be humble, mortified, devout, patient to a certain degree, and to be persecuted for own virtues, are no hurt to this selfishness. Nay, spiritual self must have all these virtues to subsist upon; and his life consists in seeing, knowing, and feeling the bulk, strength, and reality of them. But still, in all this show and glitter of virtue, there is an unpurified bottom, on which they stand: there is a selfishness, which can no more enter into the kingdom of heaven, than the grossness of flesh and blood can enter into it."

I have transcribed this passage without abbreviation; because I conceive it gives the substance of mystical theology, in terms not to be mistaken. The modest caution of Fénelon is not to be found here; and yet, who can help feeling that their systems are virtually the same? In Fénelon, no doubt, there were corrections, of which Law's language affords no mark. The latter seems to have sacrificed to his theory, all the common notions of vice and virtue; and to have transferred these two most important, and most awful terms, to states of the mind, of which, not only the respective good or evil cannot be rationally shown, but the very nature of them not clearly understood.

But the unreasonableness of Mr. Law's doctrine, is its least revolting feature: its moral characters are its worst part: they amount to this; that nothing commonly called vice, is so essentially vicious, as seeing, knowing, or feeling the reality of one's own virtue; and that no virtue is genuine, that is earnest to feel its own progress, or even to be satisfied of its own existence.

You have, perhaps, looked into the works of Sandiman: if you have, you will easily perceive the agreement, between his view of *faith*, and Law's view of *piety*. Nay, would not a disciple of Sandiman adopt Law's very words? "I believe the forgiveness of sins," says he, "with as much assurance as I believe there is a God. I believe, that Jesus Christ does, now, to all those who have a *true* and *full* faith in him, that which he did to those who so believed in him, when he was upon earth. But, if I now want to add *something* of my own to this faith, as if this great and glorious faith is defective, and saves me not, till I can add my own sense, and my own feeling, at

such a time or place ; is not this saying, in the plainest manner, that faith alone cannot justify me ? Is not this making faith in the blood of Christ defective and insufficient, till a self-satisfaction, an own-pleasure, an own-taste, are joined with it ?" (Law's Grounds and Reasons of Regeneration, page 84.) Curious, that they who set out in such opposite directions, should thus meet, like circumnavigators, on the same meridian !

I think it likely that *Fénelon* would, at no period, have adopted the language used by *Law*. *Fénelon* never lost, and could not lose, just notions concerning vice and virtue. A moral taste, such as his, would naturally, and necessarily, place limits to the aberrations of understanding. It was not, therefore, without reason, that the writers of that day have distinguished what they call false mysticism, into two species, — quietism, and semi-quietism ; — and that, while they charge the former on *Molinos*, they qualify the notions of *Madame Guyon* and *Fénelon*, by the latter appellation. I should think *Law*, when he wrote the passages I have quoted, went all the lengths of *Molinos* ; and that *Fénelon* was preserved from these, not by holding other principles, but by possessing better moral dispositions. Quietism, and semi-quietism, seem to me to differ merely in results, corresponding to the different minds and tempers of those who embrace the opinion. There is a note on *Alban Butler's* life of *St. John of the Cross*, which, I think, Mr. C. Butler might have made good use of, in the 9th chap. of his Life of *Fénelon*. It contains a good deal of information on the subject, in a short compass.

The Church of Rome triumphed in *Fénelon's* submission. But what did that submission amount to ?

To the disowning of a book, and, probably, of some verbal propositions. But all that Fénelon wrote afterwards to his correspondents, shows that he held the substance of the principle as deeply as ever. "Votre amour propre," says he, in one of his letters, "est au désespoir, quand vous ne sentez que distraction, que sécheresse, qu'ennui, que dégoût pour Dieu. Mais l'œuvre de Dieu ne se fait en nous, qu'en nous dépossédant de nous-mêmes force d'ôter toute ressource de confiance, et de complaisance à l'amour propre. Vous voudriez vous sentir bonne, droite, forte, et incapable de tout mal. Si vous vous trouviez ainsi, vous seriez d'autant plus mal que vous vous croiriez assurée d'être bien. Il faut se voir pauvre, se sentir corrompue, et injuste; ne trouver en soi que misère, en avoir horreur; désespérer de soi, n'espérer plus qu'en Dieu, et se supporter soi-même avec une humble patience sans se flatter."<sup>1</sup>

What is this, but the old doctrine in its entire strength; and how little does it differ, except in gentleness, from the last sentiments of William Law?

Fénelon honestly conceived, that he had precedents for such doctrines, in several Fathers and Saints of the Church of Rome; and, no question, both Saints, and Fathers, have said very crude, and very weak things. But, excepting the pseudo-Dionysius, it would, I believe, be hard to produce any Saint or

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<sup>1</sup> Your self-love is reduced to despair, when you can fix your attention upon nothing, when you feel only a dryness, and weariness of spirit, and an aversion to God. But the work of God is wrought in us, only by our casting off self, and by our rejecting every resource of self-confidence, and self-complacency. You wish to feel that you are good, righteous, resolute, and incapable of any evil. If you found yourself to be such, your state would be worse, in proportion as you felt assured that it was good. A man ought to perceive his own poverty; to feel his corruption, and unrighteousness; to find in himself nothing but wretchedness, and be shocked thereat; to despair of himself; to have no hope but in God, and to sustain himself with humility and patience, without any self-flattery.

Father, that confounds, with Law, the nature which man derives from creation, with the depravity which he contracts from a tainted root ; or, that damps the pursuit after higher degrees of goodness, lest self-love should be gratified by conscious improvement. As far as I know these writers, they invite men, not to self-despair, and self-horror, and self-misery ; but to the truest, deepest, surest self-enjoyment, arising from restored health, through all the faculties of the inner man ; and from the steady, harmonious, and, therefore, delightful, exercise of all three faculties, on their best and greatest object.

To trace mysticism, in its rise, might be an interesting and useful investigation ; for, like most other errors, I doubt not but it would be found to have a substratum of truth. It appears to have been held, from the beginning of Christianity, that believers in Christ were not only to grow in grace, by an unremitted progress ; but that, in thus advancing, they should, in due time, find themselves passing into a new state of mind, implying blessings superior to what they had yet enjoyed ; particularly, a clearer knowledge, a more unmixed love, and a more complete liberty. St. Paul appears to recognize the substance of this view, in his distinction between carnal and spiritual Christians, in his epistle to the Corinthians ; and it is very remarkable, that, while he uses the term μαρτύριον (testimony) to describe what he had communicated to the *carnal*, μυστήριον (mystery) is his favourite word, when he speaks of what he had imparted to the *spiritual*. For example, he tells the Corinthians, that the wisdom which he spoke among the *perfect* was, Θεοῦ σοφία ἐν μυστηρίῳ.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The wisdom of God in a mystery. 1 Cor. ii. 7.

And it is to be observed, that the apostle had the very highest authority for this distinctive language ; our Saviour having described the special privilege of his confidential servants, in these words, *ὑμῖν δέδοται γνῶναι τὰ μυστήρια τῆς βασιλείας τῶν οὐρανῶν.*<sup>1</sup> Thus, accordingly, we see St. Paul, in writing to the Ephesians [which epistle, says St. Chrysostom, *ὑψηλῶν σφῶδρα γέμει τῶν νοημάτων καὶ ὑπερόγκων· ἃ γὰρ μηδαμοῦ σχεδὸν ἐφθέγγετο, ταῦτα ἐνταῦθα δηλοῖ*]<sup>2</sup>, dwells, throughout, on *τὸ μυστήριον* (the mystery). And that this was understood, by the primitive Church, as a special and most significant distinction, implying a kind of *initiation*, not conferred upon his other correspondents, appears from the appellation given to them by Ignatius, *οἶδα*, says he, *τίς ἐμὶ, καὶ τίσιν γράφω* — *Παύλου συμμύσται τοῦ ἡγιασμένου.*<sup>3</sup>

But, even Grotius was so impressed with the unexampled depth of the Epistle to the Ephesians, as to give a character of it, which, though not necessary to my present purpose, I think well worth transcribing : *Paulus jam vetus in apostolico munere, et ob evangelium Romæ vinctus, ostendit illis quanta sit vis evangelii præ doctrinis omnibus ; quomodo omnia Dei consilia ab omni ævo eo tetenderint ; quàm admiranda sit in eo Dei efficacia ; rerum sublimitatem adæquans viribus<sup>verbis</sup> sublimioribus quam ulla unquam habuit lingua humana.*<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> To you it is given, to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. — St. Matt. xiii. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Is full of thoughts, exceedingly lofty and sublime ; for the apostle here *expounds* matters, to which he has hardly so much as *given utterance*, in any other of his writings. — Argum. Comment. in Epist. ad Ephes. Op. xi. p. 2. Ed. Bened.

<sup>3</sup> I know who I am, and to whom I am writing. — Ye are the fellow-mystics of the sanctified Paul. — Epistle to Ephesians, § 12.

<sup>4</sup> St. Paul, who, at the time of writing this epistle, had grown old in his apostolic office, and was in bonds at Rome, for the sake of the gospel, shows to



I think you will consider this concurrence of opinions as remarkable ; and, if I may add my own persuasion, formed in me after much thought, it is simply this, — that St. Paul does lay open, in that epistle, such a deep-laid scheme, respecting the form, plan, growth, and issue of the Visible Church, as he no where else communicates ; and as he then did not deem fit to be communicated, but to those who were advanced in piety, and enlarged in understanding. He speaks in somewhat of a similiar way, but very partially, and respecting only one feature in the scheme, in the 11th. chap. to the Romans.

That he was fully understood by any of that day, except where he himself furnished some explanatory key, I very much question ; but enough was apprehended to induce a belief, that mature Christians enjoyed, in the clear calmness of their minds, such a view of divine things, both in point of distinctness and enlargement, as no immature Christian could so much as conceive. Thus much was likely to be collected, from the concluding verses of the 3d. chap. of *Ephesians* alone ; and our blessed Redeemer's profound beatitude would hardly fail to present itself : “ Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”

The difference between a mere state of grace, and that advance upon it, of which we now speak, was thought chiefly to consist in this, — that, in the lower state, the mind must, in a certain sense, struggle against itself ; there being much in it ready to take part, with the various enemies from without, which

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the Ephesians, how much greater the efficiency of the gospel is, than that of any other system whatsoever ; how all the counsels of God, from all eternity, have been directed to it ; how wonderfully the power of God is displayed in it : and he soars to a level with the sublimity of his theme, in language more forcible, and more sublime, than ever fell from an uninspired tongue.

war against the soul ; and, therefore, the best condition which this lower state affords, is rather to be described as success in conflict, than as a state of peace ; while, in the advanced state, conflict is supposed to be over, in consequence of the whole inner and outer man, being brought into willing subjection to the law of God, and spirituality being not so much an effort, as a nature.

The attainableness of such a state was maintained, by all the earlier fathers. The first that made it the subject of direct description, was *Clemens Alexandrinus*, in the 6th and 7th books of the *Stromata* ; his gnostic being identically the mystic of a later period. “ It was at Alexandria, in particular,” says *Villers*, in his sketch of the history of the Church, annexed to his book on the Reformation of Luther, “ that the religion of Jesus assumed a form more speculative, or, if you will, more mystical, than it had as yet displayed. To this, *Clement*, a Grecian philosopher, who had become a Christian, more than any contributed.” Another, who distinguished himself, in a later day, by dwelling on the same point, was *Macarius*. His well-known “ fifty Homilies” abound in warm descriptions of perfect Christianity, and in exhortations to pursue it. The modern mystics adduce this latter Father, as an eminent example of their peculiar method. In short, until Ambrose first, and Augustine afterward, described the Christian state, as warfare and fluctuation to the last, all the Fathers were, on this subject, essentially of the same opinion : they all held, that mature Christianity, was a state of perfect peace. Nor did the low views of St. Augustine wholly prevent the continuance, or the excess (after a time) of this elevated idea.

To such excess, the works of the pseudo-Diony-

sus must have particularly contributed, though, indeed, the theory must have been formed, when those works were fabricated. It was, no doubt, first taken up, in any degree of extravagance, by the monks and hermits of Egypt (to which description Macarius belonged). Certain saints of the Roman Catholic Church (some male, but more female,) helped the business forward; and, some German writers, who began to appear in the 14th century, gave it its highest finishing. I ought to mention, that *St. John Climacus*, a Greek Father of the 11th century, is looked up to, by later mystics, with special veneration.

I will not assert, that even the earliest maintainers of elevated, devotional tranquillity, were sufficiently guarded in their expressions, or, perhaps, always perfectly correct in their notions. Clement's portraiture of the perfect Christian is one of the noblest things of the kind that the world ever saw: yet the assertions cannot always be defended. The same may be said of Macarius; and must be still more largely admitted of those that followed. Yet, as far as I can venture to judge, it is a different sort of extravagance, from that of Fénelon, of Law, and of Law's teachers, the *Germans*. The old mystics erred, as far as they did really err, in encouraging human beings to rival angels; those last named, on the contrary, seem (one might almost say) to be more disposed to rival lunatics. The pursuit of the ancient spiritualists, was merely to detach the mind from all corporeal and mundane goodness, that it might enjoy its own natural exercises, in the most perfect manner, on that first of objects. On the contrary, the effort of modern mystics is, or seems to be, to separate the mind from its own most essential

faculties, so as to make "growth in grace" an approximation to non-entity. Lastly, while the ancient mystic insisted only on apathy, as opposed to perturbation, the modern mystic pleads for apathy, as opposed to natural feelings : what the modern mystic, therefore, calls men to, is not happiness, in any shape or form, but an unnatural indifference, to happiness, or misery ; whereas the ancient mystic describes the state to which he aspires, as an anticipated heaven. "Such a soul," says Macarius, (as quoted by a zealous modern mystic, in the preface to a later edition of the celebrated *Theologia Germanica*,) "is all light, all eye, all spirit, all joy, all recreation, all cheerfulness, all bowels of charity, all goodness, all mercy. As a stone, in the bottom of the sea, is surrounded on all sides with water ; just so, the souls, which are wholly imbued with the Divine Spirit, become like to Jesus Christ, and are all pure, within and without : for, being thus repossessed of the Divine Spirit, how could they outwardly bring forth evil fruits ? On the contrary, all the fruits of the Spirit, must be continually and brightly apparent." I do not adduce this passage, as if I thought it free from hyperbole ; but merely to show, how *far* the notions of the ancient mystics were, from self-honour, or self-despair ; from the naked, implicit faith of Fénelon, or the partial, unevinced regeneration of Law.

That the ancient spiritualists taught a most important truth, when they asserted a settled, unclouded serenity of soul, to be the inheritance of the perfect Christian, I cannot but believe ; (unclouded, I mean, in any degree which would imply actual obscuriation, or loss of comfort :) I cannot otherwise understand St. John's "perfect love," which casteth "out fear."

So far, therefore, as those denominated mystical writers have insisted upon the depth and steadiness of spirituality, and, in describing this invaluable habit of mind, have kept within the bounds of right reason, and Holy Scripture, I conceive they have done solid service, to the interests of Christian piety. Nor do I think they wholly forfeit this praise, by the mere exaggeration of their statement, provided they introduce nothing heterogeneous, and omit nothing essential. Exaggeration is to be looked for, in all first conceptions of the human mind. But, often, in performances of this stage, however rude and irregular, may be discovered principles of truth, and elements of better things to come. The excess is, at length, corrected, by experience, and growing sagacity; and the valuable substance of truth, manifests itself without disguise, in its real colours, and just proportions. In this light, I regard those more ancient writers, whom modern mystics profess to admire and follow. They have said what admitted of being abused; but they have also said what has greatly served to keep up the tone of Christian piety. Had Clemens Alexandrinus, Macarius, and others of like soaring minds, been wanting, the very idea of mature Christianity, as distinguished from weak and struggling piety, might have been, at this day, lost and forgotten.

This distinction, I apprehend, is much more strongly marked in Holy Scripture, than it is in modern divinity. I doubt not but it will be one day acknowledged, that St. Paul's justification and sanctification, his *δικαιοσύνη*—and his *ἀγιασμός*,—do not differ from each other, as being, the one imputative, and the other, ingrafted or inherent; but, as being respectively significant of the higher, and lower stages of the Christian life. This seems to be parti-

cularly indicated, in the 4th chap. of the Epistle to the Romans; where, acting under the influence of δικαιοσύνη (righteousness), is represented as a servitude (though assuredly of the justest and noblest kind); and ἁγιασμός (sanctification) is pointed to, as the fruit to be reaped by him, who goes through his labour with fidelity. Sin is described as servitude without return, and death the wages, ἡ ἀνομία εἰς τὴν ἀνομίαν (iniquity unto iniquity) as it is in the prophet: "He sows the wind, and reaps the east wind." But, adds the apostle, "yield ye your members servants τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ, εἰς τὸν ἁγιασμόν" (to righteousness unto sanctification); the purport of which expression he more clearly fixes, when he says afterward, in the 22d verse, δουλωθέντες τῷ Θεῷ, ἔχετε τὸν καρπὸν ὑμῶν εἰς ἁγιασμόν.<sup>1</sup>

These expressions, I conceive, can mean nothing else, than that he who exercises the regenerating grace of Christ, as he ought, will be rewarded, even in this world, with an harvest of the richest blessings: the pious actings of such a mind, will pass, by degrees, from the nature of work, to that of fruit; spiritual and heavenly affections springing forth spontaneously and habitually, and implying less and less of self-denial, and more and more of enjoyment.

I have said something on this subject, I believe, in a former letter; and as my recollection is not clear, I am in danger of saying the same things over again. What I would now observe, is merely this,—that the mystical writers, especially of the earlier ages, seem, notwithstanding their faults, to have served the great interests of Christian piety, by keeping this distinction in view, until it became recognized to such an extent, as to preclude hazard of its being lost sight

<sup>1</sup> Having become servants of God, ye have your fruit unto sanctification.

of. Even Fénelon's tranquillity of self-abandonment, seems to be nothing else, than a misconception of that peace of God, which, while it keeps the heart and mind, enables the possessor to be careful for nothing : and, perhaps, Madame Guion meant little more, at first, than to describe that unlaboured and spontaneous devotion of the more mature Christian, which costs him little effort, because it is as the element in which he lives and breathes.

That extended recognition of the higher stage of Christian piety, to which I allude, has taken place most, where mysticism has most abounded : I mean, in the Church of Rome ; there being scarcely a spiritual writer of eminence in that communion, who does not urge the novice in devotion, to " go on to perfection." But it is remarkable, that the same distinction, between a higher and lower state of grace, has got firm footing in the Church of England also. Its formularies, on various occasions, suggest the idea ; and its brightest luminaries have both expanded it with care, and pressed it with cordiality.

It is not wonderful, however, that our established formularies should aim, not only at that " work of righteousness," which is " peace," but at that " effect of righteousness," which is " quietness and assurance for ever," when it is remembered, that the substance, and, for the most part, the very words of them, were the work of a father (and a pope!) who wrote the following passage : — "*Hæc est vallis quâ sancti viri mentis affectibus indesinenter exire disponunt, et ad illud ineffabile bonum, ad illud inæstimabile gaudium ascendere, quod nec oculus vidit, nec auris audivit, nec in cor hominis ascendit. Qui etsi corpore quidem inter homines esse videantur, animas tamen suas ad cœlestia elevant, et illi puro et summo bono, atque*

immortali et perpetuo, adhærentes, temporalia et corruptibilia deserunt; et mundo superiores facti, in sinu divinæ contemplationis quiescunt. Ibi in illo cœlesti templo cordis oculis Deum conspiciunt, immo et in ejusdem templi structurâ ipsi quoque lapides fiunt. (Gregor. Mag. Proæm. in Psalm vi. Pœnit. Opp. III. ii. p. 536. Ed. Benedict.)<sup>1</sup>

Such are the words of Gregory the Great, to whom it is the custom, even to this day, with zealous Protestants, to give hard appellations. Honest Mr. Milner, in his Church History, is, perhaps, the first Protestant author, who has done this excellent man, to whom the Church of England is so peculiarly indebted, competent justice.

What surprizes me respecting our Liturgy, is not, that the old parts should breathe this spirit, but that the same idea should have had place in the new parts. The Litany, for instance, appears to owe much of its matter to Cranmer and Ridley; at least, what they wrought upon, seems but as a skeleton, compared with what they have made it. Yet here, I conceive, we have the two-fold state of grace as strictly and as happily distinguished, as it could be in language. The lower state of grace, in this petition: — “That it may please thee to give us an heart to love and dread thee, and diligently to live after thy commandments:” the higher, in that

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<sup>1</sup> This life is the valley, which holy men, are, in the affections of their mind, evermore anxious to quit, and to ascend to that ineffable good, to that joy which passeth all understanding, which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man. Albeit they seem bodily, indeed, to be among men, yet they lift up their souls to heavenly things; and, clinging to that pure and supreme good, immortal, and perpetual, they forsake things temporal and perishable; and, raised above the world, they repose in the arms of divine contemplation. There, in that celestial temple, they, with the eyes of their heart, behold God: nay, they even come, themselves, to be stones in the structure of that temple.



which immediately follows : — “ That it may please thee to give unto all thy people increase of grace, to hear meekly thy word, to receive it with pure affection, and to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit.” In the first of these two sentences, there is, unquestionably, the reality of religion ; and, perhaps, as well expressed as it could be, in so many words. If it stood alone, it might almost be thought to imply as much as frail man, in this mortal state, could aspire to. What, it might be said, is to be expected, more than love, guarded by dread, and expressed in diligent, uniform obedience ? The latter sentence answers this question, by opening a new prospect, in which, instead of dread, there is meekness : — (that calm of soul in which the word of God is received, as the fruitful earth drinks in the rain from heaven : —) instead of mere love, there is pure affection ; — the “ perfect love,” which “ casts out fear.” And, instead of diligently living according to God’s law, there is a spontaneous growth, an automatus vegetation, of all that is lovely and of good report. “ Εὐάρεστον τῷ Θεῷ, καὶ δόκιμον τοῖς ἀνθρώποις.” (Rom. xiv. 18.) What a wonderful improvement, on the two corresponding petitions of the Roman Litany : — “ Ut nosmet ipsos in tuo sancto servitio confortare et conservare digneres, te rogamus. Ut mentes nostras ad cœlestia desideria erigas, te rogamus.” And yet there is a radical sameness of idea.

I think I need not adduce passages, from other parts of the Liturgy, to support what I have stated ; you will yourself at once perceive, that, though frailty is every where acknowledged, it is, as a disease, to be surmounted. We are, accordingly, taught to pray each morning, that we may that day “ fall into no sin ;” and each evening, that, by having “ our hearts set to

obey God's commandments, we may pass our time in rest and quietness." We ask, that the thoughts of our hearts may be so cleansed, as to admit of our loving God perfectly ; and that we may, in heart and mind, ascend with Christ into the heavens, and there with him continually dwell. The very oldest part of our whole Liturgy, is that versicle, response, and doxology, which stands, from time immemorial, in the Liturgies of both eastern and western churches : — " Lift up your hearts." " We lift them up unto the Lord." " It is very meet, right," &c. " Therefore, with angels and archangels," &c. And, correspondently with these exalted aims, the benediction with which communicants are dismissed, is, — " The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds," &c. In short, a low, struggling piety, is not that to which the Church of England calls its children. Throughout her formularies, she uniformly breathes a nobler spirit ; representing mature Christianity, as an anticipation of heaven. Providence has, doubtless, elsewhere furnished fitter aid, for weak and sickly spirits. But to yield nutritious food, to such healthy appetites as need no stimulus, seems to be the peculiar destination of the Church of England.

To quote examples, of what its writers have done in this department, would be endless. I shall, therefore, give a single passage from Bishop Taylor. He says, in his admirable sermon before the University of Dublin, — " Lastly, there is a sort of God's dear servants, who walk in perfectness ; who perfect holiness in the fear of God : and they have a degree of charity, and divine knowledge, more than we can discourse of, and more certain than the demonstrations of geometry ; brighter than the sun, and indeficient

as the light of heaven. This is called by the apostle, Ἀπαύγασμα τοῦ Θεοῦ. Christ is this brightness of God, manifested in the hearts of his dearest servants. Ἀλλ' ἐγὼ εἰς καθαρῶν μεροπῶν φρενα πυρσὸν ἀναπτῶ Ευμαθίης.

“ But I shall say no more of this, at this time ; for this is to be felt, and not to be talked of ; and they that never touched it with their finger, may secretly, perhaps, laugh at it in their heart, and be never the wiser. All that I can now say of it, is, that a good man is united unto God, κέντρον κέντρῳ σύναψας as a flame touches a flame, and combines into splendour and to glory ; so is the spirit of a man united unto Christ by the Spirit of God. These are the friends of God ; and they best know God's mind ; and they only that are so, know how much such men do know.”

I have selected this passage, because it comes from an old man, who had passed through vicissitudes, more than enough to repress all undue exuberance of mind ; and who, after great adversity, had risen to much prosperity and honour ; being, at the time of delivering this discourse, not only a bishop, but a privy counsellor, and Vice-Chancellor of the university of Dublin. The expressions, however, are as ardent, as those of Macarius, in his cloister ; and yet they are uttered with a degree of jealous caution. The heart is so full on the subject, that it must take vent ; but it yields to the impulse, though boldly, yet reluctantly, for fear lest few should be competent to receive such mysteries, with either reverence or relish. It is, therefore, a very weighty evidence of a very great man's maturest conviction.

The universal tendency of rooted and grounded Church-of-England men, to this exalted view, is a remarkable fact. In several other instances of a some-

what similar language, I have been obliged to suspect, that the confidence of attainment arose, in great part, from either low views of the thing to be attained, or false notions of human corruption. This thought never has occurred, respecting Roman Catholic writers; but in the case of such Protestant writers, as Arminius, Episcopius, Limborch, &c. And I gladly add, that, with respect to divines of our church, I feel no such doubt. They, clearly, have imbibed the sentiment, from those devotional formularies, to which they are providentially bound; and these have conveyed it to them, from the purest springs of antiquity. I do not mean to say, that even our best divines have treated the subject perfectly; but, what they have done, I contemplate with delight and wonder. I am struck particularly, on comparing the different progress of two persons, from whose congeniality of original feelings we can infer no so apt causes of their subsequent dissimilarity, as the different influences of their respective ecclesiastical situations: I mean, Watts, and Secker. Nothing could be more pitiable, in a good man, than the perplexities about highest verities, which enthralled and tortured the mind of the former, and seem to have increased with his years. Nothing more truly gratifying, than the confidence and zeal, respecting moral attainments, which appear to have been still advancing, even to the close of life, in the latter.

To return from my apparent digression:—I humbly persuade myself, that the pursuit and acquirement of such full-grown piety, as I have been referring to, is a prime object in the divine economy; since, throughout visible creation, the final cause of every thing capable of growth, is seen, not in what it is at first made, but in that into which it grows. To

provide, therefore, for the infallible maintenance of so essential a principle, would appear to be worthy of overruling wisdom; and it would be only consistent with what we see, in almost every other department of the providential kingdom; that, when means of maintenance, intrinsically excellent, were not in readiness, such means as existing circumstances afforded, should, in proportion to their aptitude, be made use of. In this way, I cannot but think error has been made, perhaps, in every instance, but in some instances signally, subservient to the interests of truth. The human mind was the subject to be impressed; and the present habits of the mind, were necessarily to be consulted. An infant intellect could be managed, only by proportionate influences. But those influences would not have been proportionate to such an intellect, had they contained nothing but unmixed truth.

To suffer truth, therefore, to combine itself with such ingredients, as are not morally evil in themselves, but are derived from human misconception, as it prevails at the time, — and which, consequently imply, perhaps the most likely medium of working upon human nature, while thus weak and erroneous, is, I conceive, no more than we might look for, from him who taught the people, “as they were able to bear it.” And when the period proper for a more perfect method is approaching, I think it not improbable, that the error should be permitted to become more gross, in order that it may provoke that investigation, by which the *opinionum commenta* may be separated from the *naturæ judicia*, when the former are no longer necessary to the support of the latter.

How far you may admit these thoughts, I cannot

tell ; but you will find little difficulty, in applying them to the subject I have been discussing. You will at once see, that I consider the excesses of ancient mystics, as growing out of, and fitted to, the then existing state of the human mind ; and therefore admitted, without repression, by an all-wise, and all-gracious Providence, in order to secure the continuity and advancement of an invaluable truth, which, probably, could not, otherwise, have maintained its ground in the church. And I am ready to believe, that such extravagances as those of Molinos, Madame Guion, Fénelon, and Law, have taken place exactly when they ought ; the season for safe disabusement being fully come.

Be that as it may, the refutation seems completely made. Bishop Butler, in his two sermons on the Love of our Neighbour, and in the preliminary remarks on those sermons in his preface, has demonstrated, that such views as Fénelon held, are founded on pure ignorance of man's true nature ; that is, he has proved this, by establishing (I conceive, irrefragably,) a different view. He has shown, that self-love, and disinterested love, are perfectly compatible ; in fact, that the love of any extrinsic object, in order to be real love, must be disinterested ; that is, must be for the sake of something in the object itself, and not for its subserviency to any other thing. There must, of course, be love of a thing for its own sake, whenever we take actual pleasure in that thing ; since, self-evidently, we must first love, before we can feel complacency : and though, delight being once felt, our self-love naturally prompts us to desire a continuance or repetition of it, — in that desire, however intense, there is no departure from the first disinterested love ; because

this must continue, in order to the continuance of the actual pleasure. In fact, our love of pleasure, (that is, the reflective love, which deliberately desires and seeks its object,) however strong, is no farther faulty, than as it acts upon a wrong object, or, with excess, on an inferior object; since our love (I mean our genuine, cordial love,) of a pure and perfect object, can yield us no other than a pure pleasure; and, as the love grows, the pleasure grows,—they are, in degree, as in nature, inseparably united. To desire the pleasure, in this case, therefore, is to desire the love; to seek increase of the one, is to seek increase of the other; and to repress the love of pleasure here, will infallibly be, to damp and chill the love of the object with which that pleasure is, *ipso facto*, identical.

Thus, in common life, if we wish to ascertain a man's character, we inquire, what he takes pleasure in? And, in proportion as we find that his pleasures are pure and exalted, we rely upon his integrity and steadiness. We know that all is secure, when delight is found in that, which purifies and sublimates human nature.

Saurin, therefore, states the exact truth of the case, when he says, "*Heureux le fidèle, qui, dans les combats que lui livrent les ennemis de son salut, peut opposer plaisirs à plaisirs, délices à délices : les plaisirs de la prière et de la méditation, aux plaisirs du monde ; les délices du silence et de la retraite, à celles des cercles, des dissipations, des spectacles ! Un tel homme est ferme dans ses devoirs, même parce qu'il est homme ; et qu'il ne dépend pas d'un homme, de ne pas aimer ce qui lui ouvre des sources de joie : un tel homme s'attache à la religion, par des motifs semblables à ceux, qui portent les gens du*

monde à s'attacher aux objets de leurs passions, parce qu'elles lui procurent des plaisirs ineffables."<sup>1</sup>

I have transcribed Saurin farther than I should have done, had I looked before me. I think the last sentence is ill expressed, if not ill conceived. The parallelism between worldly and spiritual pleasures is too close ; and the application of the epithet, "ineffable," to the former, is monstrous. "What fruit had ye then, in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed?" said an incomparably deeper judge of human nature. The former part, however, of the passage, neither loses its truth, nor its value, by this crudity.

I have now said all I meant to say, on the subject of mysticism ; and, finding myself in my tenth sheet, I begin to fear I have said a great deal more, than I ought to have said in a letter. I think it is my infirmity, that, when once in a subject, I know not how to extricate myself, until it ceases to hold me : I feel, also, for your disappointment when you open a packet, in expectation of receiving a review, and find only a letter. This consideration would almost restrain me from despatching these sheets, did I not think that my withholding them would imply still worse treatment. I can only commit myself to your patience, and to your good-nature. I acknowledge the subject

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<sup>1</sup> "Happy the believer, who, in his warfare with the enemies of his salvation, is able to oppose pleasures to pleasures, delight to delight ! the pleasures of prayer and meditation, to the pleasures of the world ; the delight of silence and retirement, to those of parties, of dissipation, of public amusement. Such a man is steady and unmoved in the performance of his duties, even because he is man ; and a man cannot help loving, what opens to him sources of joy. Such a man is attached to religion, by motives like those, which lead men of the world to attach themselves to the objects of their passions, because they procure him unspeakable pleasures."



interested me ; and led me, imperceptibly, much farther than I had an idea of, when I began my letter.

If you think it worth your while to make any remarks, on what I now trouble you with, they will be gratefully received by, my dear Sir,

Your very sincere and faithful servant,

ALEX. KNOX.

P.S. I am obliged to request that you will take care of this letter, as, from having no copy of it, I may be necessitated hereafter to reclaim it.

LETTER TO D. PARKEN, ESQ., IN ANSWER TO MR. PARKEN'S REPLY TO THE LETTER ON MYSTICISM.

MY DEAR SIR,

I WAS not at home when your letter arrived : I had the pleasure of finding it a day or two since, on my return from one of my usual visits, to my friends Mr. and Mrs. Peter La Touche. I now employ the first opportunity of disengaged time and thought, to tell you, that to hear from you gave me very sincere gratification.

I honestly acknowledge to you, I imagined you had given me up. And, on that supposition the note was written, which Joseph Butterworth put into your hands. I really did conclude my two letters were of so little interest to you, that I might ask for them, without occasioning to you the feeling of loss. I am now most pleasantly undeceived, and gladly give up the idea of reclaiming : my object may be attained in another way. When you place value on my letters, it would be ungrateful and unjust to deprive you of them.

You may think it strange that I made such an inference, and so rapidly, from your silence : but it is my nature to infer the worst ; and Divine Providence has not allowed me to have confidence, in my power of engaging attention. I cannot pretend to say, from what direct cause it arises ; but the fact is, that, in almost every instance in which I can be gratified, some degree of despair, and, of course, necessity for the internal act of relinquishment, has, at least, temporary place in my feelings. I doubt

not, temporary only, when the gratification is really valuable. I am confident every thing is allowed to me, which is really for my good : but, in proportion as it is pleasant, I have almost ever to bear, for a time, the imaginary loss of the pleasure. As I said, I know not the direct cause of this almost uniform occurrence : perhaps my own tendency to fear, is enough to account for it ; but sure it is, that circumstances apt to excite such fear, almost always appear. These impress me the more, as I have a strong, though I hope not fanciful, belief, of a particular providence ; and also, as I conceive, these temporary disappointments, have had a salutary effect on my mind ; teaching me, in a small measure, the lesson of St. Paul, *οἶδα καὶ ταπεινοῦσθαι, οἶδα καὶ περισσεύειν*.<sup>1</sup> The very little I have attained of this knowledge, I am indebted for, to the providential discipline (for such I cannot but deem it) just mentioned : indebted, I mean, subordinately to that immediate influence, called grace, (*τῇ χάριτι*,) which, in my creed, is paramount to all instrumentality, or mediate agency. Let me assure you, that your wish to have my thoughts, and, still more, your thinking it worth while to examine them with closeness, are to me very gratifying circumstances. I know nothing in my own condition, which I can think of with regret, except the fewness of those I find, who are disposed to think with intensity. From several, I can obtain a hearing ; but, from very few indeed, can I obtain the benefit of being ransacked and sifted. I am ready to hope, that some of my conceptions, may be not wholly useless : but I can have no assurance of this, until they pass the trial of

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<sup>1</sup> Phil iv. 12. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound.

other minds, which can have none of that prejudice, that may be in mine. Judge, then, how interesting it is to me, to receive such remarks, as are contained in your last letter. When you are so kindly disposed to employ, both your reasoning, and criticising faculties, on what I write, you are in no danger of long wanting communications. I first wish to advert to your desire of using the letter respecting mysticism ; and my answer is, make any use of it, in any way your judgment directs, which will be consistent with my making use of it, in any way I may find expedient, hereafter. I am obliged to make this reserve, as I know not what future occasion I may have to revert to that subject ; and I love to secure to myself the most unfettered liberty. I hope this limitation will not, in any measure, jar with your purpose : if it does not, my thoughts are completely at your service.

Your " verbal criticism," was most necessary, and is most just. " Whole attention" is precisely what it should have been : the truth is, that, through frailty of memory, while I am writing this sentence, the last has (often) disappeared. I only wonder, you have not had occasion to point out a great many similar incoherences. From the same cause, I find it morally impossible for me to say at this moment, what I could wish, respecting my strictures on Fénelon. My observations can be made only at random. I have no copy of what I wrote ; and particulars I forget.

I would say, in general, 1. that I never meant to question the vitality of Fénelon's piety ; nor consequently a softening in practice, of that, which, in his theory, appeared most hard. There is a *vis medicatrix* in the moral, as well as in the physical consti-

tution ; especially, — rather above all comparison most eminently, — where the love of God has, in any sound manner, become rooted in the heart. I therefore have no wish to maintain, that all and every of Fénelon's strange expressions, were adhered to by him, *au pied de la lettre* ; I should rather hope, that his actual feelings retained that soundness, in some good degree, which his notions left behind. That he suffered practical loss, I am disposed to believe ; but that he always possessed the substance of true piety, I should be very far from questioning. But that substance of piety must of necessity have had, in many instances, a corrective tendency. When, therefore, I speak of “a bare abstract belief in God's infinite essence,” I mean to express my idea of that to which the system would lead, were there no corrective, rather than of what it actually induces. The machinery of the heart, having been adapted by its divine contriver to the service of truth, does not give itself fully to the service of error. It works automatically, in its own way ; and resists the misled worker of it, to his own great advantage. This has been exemplified repeatedly, in the case of theoretic antinomians. There is no ground for supposing, that Crisp or Saltmarsh, were devoid of true piety, though their theory seemed to sap its foundation ; and doubtless would have done so, in those very men, had not their hearts been better than their understandings.

I would, however, observe, 2. that willing as we must be, to acquit such characters as Fénelon, the supposition of another more favourable meaning, seems scarcely a tenable ground. That the expressions do not contain all the mischief which the first glance would suggest, I have admitted. But I fear

we cannot conclude, from any sufficient evidence, that they mean another matter ; for this would imply a mere mistaking of terms, which the next sentence would probably enable us to rectify. At all events, the true sense would speedily and prevalently show itself. What was conceived in the mind, could not long remain disguised in the expressions, even where the faculty of expression was not (as in Fénelon) at once copious and exquisite. When, therefore, I turn over Fénelon's pages, and find not only the same language, but the same ideas, under different forms of language, perpetually occurring, I am forced to infer that he meant more, than " to proscribe all pride and self-complacency, in the idea of a meritorious self-sacrifice." That he possessed this humble feeling, I am sure ; but had this been the limit of his notion, it would have been somewhere distinctly marked. But, if I mistake not, such distinctness occurs no where ; I mean, that we no where find any clue, which would fairly lead us to this rational interpretation. On the contrary, I think the whole strain of his spiritual letters implies a settled hostility, not only to such evil dispositions as you refer to, but to movements belonging to our inmost nature ; — consequently, not to be suppressed, without inducing, at least, a voluntary insanity ; and not to be excluded from piety, but with certain injury to its growth and perfection.

This is the extent of my charge against Fénelon. I do not conceive he cherished in himself, or even knowingly suffered, any wrong temper. I believe he most truly possessed the vitality of Christian piety ; and I cannot doubt, that, so far as mere exercises of the heart advance piety, there was growth in his religion. But I imagine there was no aid from his

understanding ; rather, I apprehend, there was real and great impediment. It was a fine understanding, not employed in the work for which it was made, even though that work had engaged and captivated the heart. The results of such incongruity of mind may be easily supposed : I think they are exemplified throughout his later writings : still, I do not mean to say, that his religion ever subsided into “ a bare abstract belief in God’s infinite essence : ” I merely meant that his theory, pursued consistently, would lead to this termination. I own, too, it is my general persuasion, that all theories about practical matters, must, in spite of correctives, influence, more or less, the inward practice, at least, of him who holds them. Were not this to be apprehended, our discussions respecting theories would be waste of time.

I think you are perfectly right, in making a marked distinction between Fénelon and William Law : I intended strongly to convey this idea. Fénelon’s errors were as innoxious to him, as such errors could be. One may, therefore, examine his case without pain. But I should not wish to analyse the character of William Law. His temper, first and last, is of a questionable complexion.

You so substantially conceive my design, that I need add nothing more in the way of explanation ; and, were I to enlarge in general remarks, I should be in danger of writing over again, what you have had before you. One or two matters only, shall be mentioned.

It strikes me, that complete mysticism comes strictly within St. Paul’s idea of building wood, hay, and stubble, on the good foundation, and I think the charitable issue, to which he brings this accumulation of error, both instructs, and warrants our kindly con-

clusion respecting mystics, even of the highest order. I am aware you may question my application of the passage, to private, individual self-management. But alas! I cannot stop to justify it; that would require a comment on the whole passage; and one of the finest written passages it is, that ever came from the pen of man. The two-fold illustration is so happily chosen, in order to elucidate, first, what God does in us, and then, what we are to do for ourselves; and the transition is so easy, and yet so artful, so apparently natural, and yet so exquisitely designed, that I really know nothing to be compared to it. In fact, the first three chapters are all at the top of human writing, in addition to the weight they derive, in common with other parts of Scripture, from infallible guidance.

But to return: our Saviour evidently gives us, both the commencement and perfection of true religion, when he says, "God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Now I think the grand failure of the mystic is, that he confines himself to the first of these, and pays no regard to the second. Many are thus deficient from intellectual weakness; others, from unconscious error, and inadequate training. But the mystic does the thing of set purpose; he systematically rejects truth (as I conceive) in the very sense, in which our Lord urges it. "Spirit," in our Lord's sense, clearly means, a divinely wrought rectitude of inclination; and in truth, he no less certainly intends, to comprise all the means and matter of right direction: these, no less really than spirit, come from God. "Sanctify them through thy truth," says our Saviour; yet, evidently, the means of conveying this truth to us, are as various, as



God's sensible or intelligible works ; and our attainments will necessarily depend, on the wisdom and assiduity with which we apply ourselves to this pursuit. Here then, I conceive, it is, that the mystic falls short of the Christian calling ; and must do so, in the nature of things, because he neglects the only method, in which (without a miracle) the object is attainable.

Herein, if I mistake not, we see a deep provision of united wisdom and goodness. Goodness, in making the vitality of religion so independent of intellectual capacity or conduct ; and wisdom, in so closely connecting religious progress and perfection, with a proper exercise of intellectual powers. Had not the substance of piety been independent of advanced intellect, it must have been so confined, in time, place, and subject, as to have scarcely retained existence ; if it could ever have existed at all, in this world. And again, how could progress in piety have been so well ensured, as by putting perfection, in this instance, substantially on the same footing, as in all other analogous cases ?—namely, making it a matter to be gained or missed, according as it is sought with assiduity or with negligence, with wisdom or with weakness ?

I conceive through this latter provision alone, could religion maintain its ascendancy, either in the individual mind or in the collective mass. If things were not so adjusted, that piety might grow with intellectual growth, and be strengthened with intellectual strength, either intellect must be restrained in its progress, or piety will be left in a minority. But the increase of piety, in reasoning beings, must necessarily suppose, and chiefly depend upon, an apt exercise of the reasoning faculty ; and this, again,

will require apt objects and means, upon which, and through which, it may be so exercised. And these objects and means must be such, as to fit the highest, as well as lowest intellect. I mean, while they admit beginners, they must furnish work for advanced students; they must be such as to form proficient, and still continue to call forth proficiency. I humbly conceive that, if Christianity did not realize these suppositions, it would not be adapted to human nature; the individual would leave it behind him, so soon as he was stimulated to any intellectual career; and it would infallibly become obsolete, in (what I think we now see) a rapidly advancing world. It follows then, on the whole, that, while the principle of spiritual life is essentially from above, and every advance in it implies Divine concurrence, still, the management and culture of this life is, like that of the rational or civil life, so subjected to free-agency, as to make improvement ordinarily dependent on wise activity; to the eliciting, aiding, and rewarding which activity, from period to period of individual life, and from age to age of the world, all the means furnished by infinite wisdom, have been systematically and most exquisitely adjusted.

I acknowledge to you, this is a point on which I always dwell with pleasure. My own feelings would, alone, prove to me how great the demands of the advancing mind are, for objects proportioned to its fresh degrees of capacity. And at no period of the world's life, was substantially the same demand of society at large, more distinct, or more urgent, than at this day. What then would become of Christianity, if it, also, had not a like property of expansiveness? Let honest mystics say what they will, there is a loftiness in the human mind, which is in-

herent in its essence, which may be pressed, and even bound down, may be prostrated by force, but never wholly destroyed. I humbly conceive it is a part of our original similitude to Him who made us. I am aware that many, not mystics throughout, think that the humbling of this intellectual loftiness, is the first operation of evangelic grace; and that there is, accordingly, a contrariety in the gospel to man's reason, as well as to his depravity. I cannot believe this. I am persuaded, the intellect of man, when not morally vitiated, finds nothing in the Gospel to revolt it; but, on the contrary, every thing to delight it; provided (I ought to add) that neither prejudice in the enquirer, nor misrepresentation on the part of teachers, gives a false impression. Were it otherwise, I again ask, what would become of Christianity, amid the tastes and habits of mind now forming, under French astronomers, and English chymists. In such a state of things, the gospel of the mystics could not even be exhibited, and every view of revealed religion which repels, I would even say, which does not recognize and gratify true philosophy, must more and more decline. The desideratum, then, is, most clearly, a view of Christianity which, even in the intellectual contest, will call forth nobler exercises of mind, and compensate them with far more exalted, though still congenial prizes.

I am sure I need take no pains to satisfy you, that when I speak of Christian perfection, I attach to the term a sober and rational idea. Even that fine passage from bishop Taylor, I do not literally adopt, though I read it with delight. Had he been a younger man, I should have suspected its solidity; but his age stamps a value on it. Doddridge, however, says things little less exalted. I sometimes am

ready to question, whether this last-named excellent person might not have lost his high delight, had he lived much longer in that multiplicity of business, and strife of tongues, in which he was placed ; and that therefore he was taken away, in peculiar tenderness. But, be this as it may, if, by moderate Calvinists, you mean persons like Doddridge, I must own there is no incompatibility between their Calvinism, and the sober belief of complete sanctification, on this side the grave.

But, if I were to go at large into the question, "Can a Calvinist, strictly so called, consistently and congenially embrace and pursue this idea?"—I should be compelled to start many doubts. I should be sorry to cherish prejudice, but my present apprehension certainly is, that the supreme reliance of Calvinists for acceptance with God, on an indefectible righteousness without them, counteracts that convergiment of all the powers, and all the solitudes of mind, through which alone, settled habits of moral love to God, and delight in God, can be arrived at. I must add, if by "modern and moderate Calvinism," you mean that of which Andrew Fuller has given a specimen, in his letters on Sandemanianism, I will not dispute the position. I only question the possibility of Calvinists keeping this ground. Having grown thus far moderate, is it not likely they will grow yet more moderate? What that moderation may imply, time will best show. But should it become excessive, a sort of moral advancement will probably be insisted on, which, at first view, might appear like the ancient doctrine of perfection. For instance, the usual application of the seventh chapter to the Romans will be given up, and the description will be confined to those not yet re-

generate. But should this conjecture be realized, it will imply more show than substance. Such, at least, is the inference I make, from the case of Arminius and his followers. The argument of Arminius, to fix the subject of that celebrated chapter, is learned and luminous. But, when I narrowly examine the kind of moral strength and liberty, which is contemplated as attainable, I think I see more latitude than elevation; and I am ready to fear that it is not the man who is raised, but the standard which is lowered. I have particularly had this feeling, in reading what Philip Limborch writes on the point in question.

The true doctrine of Christian perfection, unites humility with confidence, and tenderness with liberty. Above all, it derives its strength never from merely moral, but supremely from évangelic sources: Πάντα ἰσχύω ἐν τῷ ἐνδυναμοῦντί με Χριστῷ.<sup>1</sup>

The two petitions in the Litany, doubtless need some collateral elucidation. But I conceive that must not be sought, in any accessible remains of those generally called reformers. The two prelates, Cranmer and Ridley, were strictly our reformers. And I suppose, in matters of research and literary labour, Ridley was, for the most part, the sole actor. It is remarkable, that Cranmer expresses sentiments in his few private remains, which in no instance occur in our Common Prayer Book. At the close of one of his three papers, (given by Strype,) occasioned by the King's Book, "the Erudition of a Christian Man," he distinctly maintains the doctrine of Christ's righteousness imputed. But this is not once mentioned in either prayers or articles. This is the

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<sup>1</sup> Phil. iv. 13. I can do all things, through Christ which strengtheneth me.

more worthy of note, as it was a favourite doctrine with both Luther and Calvin; and as we find it strenuously asserted by the prisoners in London, in their protest against a public disputation. (Burnet's Hist. Reformat. Part II., Book II., 1554). I may observe, by the way, that this last named paper had ten names annexed to it; three of those who had been bishops, Coverdale, Ferrar, and Hooper. And yet it does not appear, that any one of the ten had ever been consulted, or allowed to have part, in either Common Prayer or Articles. Had they possessed influence, the Church of England would have been more puritanical, both in doctrine and worship. But their exclusion from interference is the less extraordinary, when even Cranmer did not deem himself at liberty to introduce such sentiments of his own, as happened to correspond with theirs. Have we no light on this mysterious point? For, is it not mysterious, that even Cranmer should keep back his own avowed opinions? It might be shown that he did this, in other instances. There is, on the whole, strong ground for thinking, that neither in its government, nor in its worship, was the Church of England what Cranmer wished to make it.

I conceive two obvious checks were upon him: the influence of his excellent coadjutor; and the restraining power of the principle, on which the work had been undertaken. I call Ridley excellent, not merely because he stood in Cranmer's way, but because he was really one of the best men, both in point of head and heart, that then lived. Every thing he has left, evinces this. Disinterested, gentle, benignant; yet prudent, acute, and resolute. Thinking strongly for himself, but always practically determining, not merely by what ought to be, but also, by

what could be done. Attached to antiquity, reverencing its sanctions only less than those of Holy Scripture, and wishing to be guided by the former, wherever it did not seem to him to contradict the latter. "Why," says he, speaking, in a letter from his prison, of John Knox's hostile movements at Frankfort, "will he not rather follow that, which the sentence of the ancient writers does more allow? from whom to dissent without warrant of God's word, I cannot think it any godly wisdom."

In these few words, we see Ridley's rule of conduct. In a season when every thing conspired to make novelty engaging, he maintained a temperament of mind, peculiar, in great measure, to himself. Where he could not effect exactly what he wished, he acquiesced as far as conscience allowed, still retaining his own sentiment. Thus, we know from himself, that the Reformation went too far, to be precisely suitable to his taste; and yet, such as it was, (finding it not possible to keep it within the line his mind marked for it,) he supported it with unremitting zeal. The avowal of his dissent occurs in a letter to a Mr. White, who had been his chaplain, and who was urging him to conform, after Queen Mary's accession, by the argument (as it should seem) of his own partial disagreement with what had been done in the former reign. "You have known me long indeed;" replies he; "in the which time it hath chanced me, as you say, to mislike some things. It is true, I grant; for sudden changes, without substantial and necessary cause, and the heady setting forth of extremities, I did never love." These words, again, give the clearest view of Ridley's ruling disposition, and leave no

shadow of doubt, how he would use the influence of which it was his lot to be possessed.

One instance we have, of his open resistance of Cranmer, in the case of Hooper's scruple about the episcopal vestments. The Archbishop was willing to yield, but Ridley persevered in demanding conformity; and was, to a certain degree, victorious. I quote this case merely as illustrative. Be his conduct what it might in point of wisdom, (what I myself think I need not now trouble you with,) it gave evidence of the line he wished to observe. And, if he succeeded in this public matter, we cannot doubt, that his interference was both prompt and efficient, in numberless things, which, without him, would have been otherwise regulated.

To Ridley, therefore, I ascribe much of the actual shape and character of our formularies, especially as they stood in the first Prayer Book of Edward; and, as I cannot doubt but the speedy change in those formularies, (made, as it is thought, at the instance of P. Martyr, and M. Bucer, &c.), set forth in Edward's second Prayer Book, was the thing chiefly referred to in his complaint just quoted; so, I should infer, that the retaining so much as was retained in that latter Prayer Book, was very much due to the stand made by him against greater alterations. But, as I said, there was also a principle adopted in the commencement, which favoured Ridley, and restrained Cranmer.

This principle was no other, than that which has been already expressed in Ridley's own words: namely, adherence to antiquity, wherever antiquity did not appear to oppose the written word. Whether Cranmer was, or was not, cordial in taking this ground, (for with him it might have been as much



from policy, as with Ridley it was choice,) still, such was the ground taken. This is evident from the whole proceeding; it is avowed in that preliminary discourse, "Of the service of the Church," in terms the most unequivocal; and it was farther most practically recognized, in the disputation at Oxford. Cranmer, indeed, when hard pressed, seemed almost willing to give up the Fathers. But Ridley, never; and we know it was this latter, who was the pillar. But, in truth, the Common Prayer Book is a standing evidence, that adherence to antiquity is the character, which distinguishes our national Church, from the other portions of the Reformation. There is no expression of doctrinal sentiment so authentic, as that which is used in addressing the Searcher of hearts. When we speak to man, we modify what we say, and blend prudence with truth, to conciliate, or at least not revolt, human weakness. When we solemnly approach our God, we must, if ever, be explicit, direct, and simple. The heart, if right, will there endure no disguise. Now we, to this day, address God in public, chiefly in the language of antiquity; retaining not merely the sense, but, generally, the exact words. Even where additions were made, they were imitations of the older parts; and, in general, such imitations, as could not, by internal marks, be distinguished from the original work. On these grounds, can I make any other conclusion than that already stated: that, next to the explicit word of God, pious antiquity is the standard of the Church of England?

According, most strictly, to this idea, our national system is defined by the acute and inquisitive Mosheim: "*Illa veteris religionis correctio, quæ Britannos æque a Pontificiis, atque a reliquis familiis*

quæ Pontificis dominationi renunciarunt, sejungit<sup>1</sup> : ” and he says this of it, after its last establishment by Elizabeth. Alas, when he tells us that the decrees of the synod of Dordt fell rapidly into contempt in England, he adds, “Hoc ut accideret necesse pœne fuit, quum Angli ecclesiam suam ad primorum sæculorum instituta sententias et leges componi velint; Patres autem quos nominant ante Augustinum, a decretis Dordracenis plane abhorruerint.”<sup>2</sup> This last assertion is doubtless most true; still the western Church has ever greatly revered, though it has never implicitly followed Augustine; and, in this feeling, we have every reason to think, both our reformers participated. That Ridley did not adopt Augustine’s peculiar dogmas, we have direct evidence in his answer to John Bradford’s letter respecting Harry Hart; and the same correspondence shows irrefragably, that neither side, I mean, neither Bradford nor Ridley, deemed the 17th article to have asserted absolute predestination.

I have taken this prolix, and perhaps to you uninteresting, circuit, in order to establish, in what quarter we are to seek elucidation of what we find in the Common Prayer Book. It is, at least, a question about which there has been a great deal of talk; and, as yet, with little satisfaction. If I mistake not, the few facts I have stated, furnish a definitive answer. They bring us to this point: if we would

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<sup>1</sup> That amendment of the old religion, which separates the Britons alike from the Roman Catholics on the one hand, and from the rest of the communities, which have renounced the papal dominion, on the other. Cent. xvi. Sect. iii. Part ii. Chap. ii. § 17.

<sup>2</sup> This may almost be said to have been an unavoidable result, inasmuch as the English wish their church to be conformed to the institutions, sentiments, and rules, of the first centuries; and it is certain that the Fathers, down to the time of Augustine, were in perfect opposition to the doctrines maintained by the synod of Dordt. Cent. xvii. Sect. ii. Part ii. Chap. ii. § 19.

understand our formularies, we must resort to the sources from whence they were derived, and consult those ancients, from whose concurrent sense, and deeply digested expression, it was deemed no "godly wisdom" lightly to deviate.

You speak (naturally enough) of the "Fathers of the English Church." But, in truth, our Church had no Fathers, but those of the Church Catholic. Much as our reformers did, *they* were not the Fathers of our Church. They presumed not to claim a relation so discreditable to it, and so intrinsically unfounded. They, at most, exercised toward their venerable parent, the necessitated office of physicians and surgeons: not, however, hacking her in pieces, and putting her into a reforming caldron; but, by gentle operations, and judicious alteratives, they disembarassed her constitution, and assisted nature. At least such was the avowed plan, from which Divine Providence permitted no material deviation.

With the clue, then, which these facts afford, we can put the meaning of those two petitions in the Litany, beyond the shadow of question. It is, indeed, somewhat curious, that an evidence presents itself, which, at once, settles this point, corroborates (virtually) what I have been stating, and throws a light on the 17th article, as important as it is unattended to. What I refer to occurs in Bishop Overall's observations on the then disputed doctrines, given by Ford at the end of his book on the articles. [p. 446.] I will give you his words, though it will be a long quotation. He is speaking of the 17th article. [Articulus docet] "*Deum constanter decrevisse electos et prædestinatos liberare et salvare; sed simul indicat, prædestinationem esse decretum consilii divini, nobis occulti, donec per fructus ejus annexa serie consertos*

patefiat ; quod non statim in omnibus credentibus fit : ideoque non facile de electione præsumendum, nec prædestinationem nisi piis conferendam, his solis qui vere pii sunt, et sentiunt in se vim Spiritus Sancti facta carnis mortificantem, ut Augustinus et Prosper docent, . . Qui in charitate radicati et confirmati fuerint, cum vera consolatione possunt de electione divina cogitare, fidemque de salute per Christum consequenda stabilem habere ; juxta definitionem in Gratiano et Lombardo ex patribus collectam, Inchoatam charitatem eam esse, quæ amittitur ; non radicatam aut perfectam, juxta illud Apostoli, Perfecta charitas foras ejicit timorem. Itaque ex una parte, nec omnibus etiam vere regeneratis, ac credentibus, certa salus addicenda, nec eisdem omnibus, quantoscunque in pietate et fide gradus fecerint, incerta salus relinquenda ; sed his qui solide in fide et charitate radicati fuerint, ut electis et prædestinatis, certa perseverantiæ fiducia, et spes firma salutis tribuenda.<sup>1</sup>

Though the next paragraph is foreign to my present purpose, I cannot but transcribe it, it states so

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<sup>1</sup> (The article teaches) that *God hath constantly decreed, to deliver and save the elect and predestinate* ; but, at the same time, it declares, that predestination is the decree of the Divine counsel, secret to us, until it is made manifest by the fruits of it, which are appended thereto in a connected series. Now, this does not take place immediately in all believers ; and for this reason, belief of election must not be lightly taken up, and predestination must be attributed to none but godly persons ; to none but such as are indeed godly, and *feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh*, as Augustine and Prosper teach. They, who are rooted and grounded in love, are able to think of the *Divine election* with true comfort ; and to have an established *faith of eternal salvation, to be enjoyed through Christ* ; — according to the definition in Gratian and Lombard, gathered out of the fathers, *that the love which is lost, is only incipient love, not that which is grounded and perfect* ; which is in harmony with the Apostle's declaration, *perfect love casteth out fear*. Therefore, we must not, on the one hand, attribute a *certainty of salvation*, even to all the truly regenerate, nor, on the other, *must salvation be left uncertain* to all such, however great may be their progress in godliness and faith ; but to those of them who are steadily rooted in faith and love, we must assign, as to the elect and predestinate, an assured confidence of perseverance, and a firm hope of salvation.

strongly (and I am satisfied not less truly) the ancient view of a tenet, maintained in later times, with the most unyielding confidence.

“ Certe sententia illa de quâ tantopere pugnatur ; de certâ perseverantiâ eorum omnium, qui simul crediderint ac regenerati fuerint, nullis unquam Veteris Ecclesiæ patribus probata fuerat ; sed ab omni antiquitate rejecta, et perpetua omnium temporum experientia nimium refutata, et non nisi hoc ultimo sæculo nata, et ex æmulatione quæ Zuinglio, sociisque ejus, cum Lutherò, intercessit, in Ecclesiam introducta.”<sup>1</sup>

I return to the former paragraph of the quotation, which I wish you to take the trouble of considering. No man was better skilled in questions of theology, than Bishop Overall. He has left little behind him ; but all that he has left, discovers the most solid theological learning, and the strictest and soberest research. The views of the ancient writers being present to his mind, he at once recognizes them in the 17th article. He sees that the simple object was, to express substantially, what all the Latin Fathers had agreed in maintaining ; namely, that there was not only a reality, but a maturity in piety, and that this maturity, being the certain pledge of perseverance, was, by consequence, the evidence of belonging to that number, whom the foreseeing God has ever contemplated with complacency.

I have no present concern with the controversy

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<sup>1</sup> Assuredly, that opinion about which so much controversy is raised, concerning the certainty of the perseverance of all those in whom faith and regeneration were simultaneous, was never sanctioned by any of the fathers of the ancient Church, but was rejected by all antiquity, and hath been only too completely refuted by the uninterrupted experience of every age : indeed, it did but come into existence in the last century and was brought into the Church, by the differences which arose between Luther, and Zuinglius and his followers.

which this point involves, whether God foresaw what he had predestined, or predestined according to what he foresaw? What interests me is, the clear maintenance of the two states of grace, that of *charitas inchoata*, (incipient love) and that of *charitas radicata et perfecta* (rooted and perfect love). This distinction, you see, is not introduced as a private opinion, or a sentiment held by some and overlooked by others, but it is a definition collected from the Fathers generally, by both their celebrated epitomizers (that is, by Gratian and Lombard). It was current, indeed, in all the ecclesiastical writers, and continues to be so in Roman Catholic books of piety, to this day.

The earlier writers, in fact, spoke of three states, corresponding to St. John's babes, young men, and fathers. With them, the true disciple is either *incipiens*, *proficiens*, or *perfectus* (incipient, proficient, or perfect). But this distinction is, in substance, the same as *charitas inchoata* (incipient love), and *charitas radicata* (love rooted and grounded), since the middle term amounts to nothing more than the necessary progress, from the commencing, to the confirmed state. As I find from St. Augustine, in Peter Lombard (now lying before me) [III. xxix.] "*Nunquid mox ut nascitur [charitas], jam prorsus perfecta est? immo ut perficiatur, nascitur: cum fuerit nata, nutritur; cum fuerit nutrita, roboratur; cum fuerit roborata, perficitur; cum ad perfectionem venerit, dicit, Cupio dissolvi, &c.?*"<sup>1</sup> In strict conformity to which language, that other petition of the Litany says, "That it may please thee to strengthen such as do stand."

But, were I to enlarge here, there would be no end

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<sup>1</sup> Is love absolutely perfect, the instant it is born? So far from it, it is born, in order that it may be brought to perfection. When it has been born, it is nourished; when it has been nourished, it is strengthened; when it has been strengthened, it is made perfect; when it has arrived at perfection, it saith, *I desire to depart and to be with Christ, &c.*

of what might be said ; and particularly I should be in danger of repeating, what I have said in my last. I will, therefore, limit myself to very few words. I would observe, that the two states, of inchoate, and perfect piety, have been so uniformly insisted on by the whole current of writers, from the earliest times, as to make it impossible that it should have been overlooked by Cranmer and Ridley. If there be any one of the Fathers (I speak of those with whom I am somewhat acquainted) who does not love to inculcate this distinction, it is certainly Augustine. But even he cannot help recognizing it, though, after his engaging in the Pelagian controversy, he was fond of lowering even regenerated man. But he has done so nobly, in explaining the vitality of Christian piety, that one is ready to overlook his less exalted view of its perfection. Our two Bishops, especially Ridley, knew how to give Augustine his due place, without any blind deference. The consensus omnium<sup>1</sup> was (under holy scripture) the acknowledged standard, which, in this as well as other instances, furnished a corrective, for the influence of the greatest individual names.

But the truth is, that the same doctrine is every where occurring, throughout the ancient part of our formularies. The object aimed at in them all (less systematically but not less substantially, than in those two petitions,) is, the being rooted and grounded in love. What but this is asked for, in the collect which opens the communion service? "Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee, and worthily magnify thy holy name." To quote from

the occasional collects, especially for the Sundays after Trinity, would occupy too much room. Observe what that for the fourteenth Sunday implores, "an increase," &c., the essence of which is made to consist, in loving what God commands, (as before, in the admirable collect for the fourth Sunday after Easter); and mark, that this collect is prefixed to that passage of Scripture, which enumerates "the fruit of the Spirit." See, also, the luminous petition, which is contained in the second sentence of the collect for the eighteenth Sunday, — as a sequel to the conquest prayed for in the first sentence. Consider, also, the spirit of those for the twentieth, and twenty-first Sundays, in which not only sincerity, or even fidelity, but serenity and hilarity in the ways of God, are aspired to. In short, the piety of the ancient church, was a winged piety, which was ever soaring, or, at least, (as Dr. Cudworth expresses it,) "fluttering toward heaven, to embosom itself with God." And our portion of the church having been happily led to retain the *ἱερα πτερόεντα*, in which that piety breathed forth its soul, the primitive spirit still lives in our ordinances, and is in readiness to transfuse itself into the mind and heart of every Simeon and Anna, that departs not from our temples.

On this topic I should have much to say, and not a little to explain; but I am getting into extravagant length. May I just venture to observe, that it is not (I trust) in any trite or vulgar way, that I plead for our established religion? Whatever views I entertain, are the result of the deepest and most dispassionate thought of which I am capable; and however definite may be my conclusions, they do not, to my apprehension, check the expansiveness



of my charity. I will now only add, that nothing can be more different than my sentiments are, from those of the class, in England, who have been called High Churchmen. Points of agreement there are; but, on leading points, I am of quite another mind.

I said, St. Augustine insisted least of all the Fathers I have looked into, on maturity in piety. Yet, even he maintains it in substance, and therefore you see him quoted by Overall. That I may give you a specimen of his manner, I will transcribe two short passages. The first, from his discourses on the first Epistle of St. John. (Tract. ix. § 4.) *Timor non est in caritate. Quid ergo dicimus de illo, qui cœpit timere diem judicii? Si perfecta in illo esset caritas, non timeret. Perfecta enim caritas faceret perfectam justitiam, et non haberet quare timeret; immo haberet quare desideraret ut transeat iniquitas, et veniat regnum Dei. Ergo timor non est in caritate. Sed in qua caritate? non in inchoata. In qua ergo? Sed perfecta, inquit, caritas, foras mittit timorem. Ergo incipiat timor: quia initium sapientiæ timor Domini. Timor quasi locum præparat caritati. Cum autem cœperit caritas habitare, pellitur timor qui ei præparavit locum. Quantum enim illa crescit, ille decrescit; et quantum illa fit interior, timor pellitur foras. Major caritas, minor timor; minor caritas, major timor. Si autem nullus timor, non est quâ intret caritas. Sicut videmus per setam introduci linum, quando aliquid suitur; seta prius intrat, sed nisi exeat, non succedit linum: sic timor primò occupat mentem, non autem ibi remanet timor, quia ideo intravit, ut introduceret caritatem.<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> THERE IS NO FEAR IN LOVE. What then are we to say of him, who has begun to fear the day of judgment? If love were perfect in him, he would not

The second passage occurs in the treatise, *De Vera Religione*, chap. xxiv. I transcribe it chiefly on account of its close agreement with our Lord's *Πνεῦμα καὶ Ἀλήθεια* (spirit and truth), and St. Paul's *Πίστις καὶ Ἐπίγνωσις*, faith and knowledge. "*Animæ medicina, quæ divina providentia, et ineffabili beneficentia geritur gradatim distincteque, pulcherrima est. Distribuitur enim in auctoritatem atque rationem. Auctoritas, fidem flagitat, et rationi præparat hominem. Ratio, ad intellectum cognitionemque perducit. Quanquam neque auctoritatem ratio penitus deserit, cum consideratur, cui sit credendum; et certe summa est ipsius jam cognitæ atque perspicuæ veritatis auctoritas.*"<sup>1</sup>

I think you will agree with me, that this contains an admirable view of our divine religion, and points out the true principle of progression. "Ye shall know the truth," said our Redeemer, "and the

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fear. For perfect love, would produce perfect righteousness, and he would have no cause for fear: nay, he would have cause to desire the passing away of iniquity, and the coming of the kingdom of God. **THERE IS, THEN, NO FEAR IN LOVE.** But in what love? not in incipient love. In what then? **BUT PERFECT LOVE, SAITH THE APOSTLE, CASTETH OUT FEAR.** Therefore, let fear begin the work: **FOR THE FEAR OF THE LORD IS THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM.** Fear does, as it were, prepare a place for love. When, however, love hath begun to take possession, fear, which prepared a place for it, is cast out. For, in proportion to the growth of the former, is the decay of the latter: and the more deeply seated love comes to be in the heart, the more fear is cast out. The greater love, the less fear; the less love, the greater fear. If, however, there be no fear, love hath no means of entrance. Just as in sewing, we see that the thread is introduced by the needle; the needle enters first, but unless it pass out, the thread does not follow: thus, fear first takes possession of the mind, but does not continue there, because it entered for the express purpose of bringing in love.

<sup>1</sup> The medicine of the soul, which is conveyed by the providence and unspeakable goodness of God, is, in its degrees and divisions, most beautiful. For it falls under the two heads, of authority, and reason. Authority, demands faith, and prepares man for reason. Reason, leads him on to understanding and knowledge. Yet authority, on the one hand, is never independent of reason, since there is the consideration, what we are to believe; and, on the other hand, beyond all question, the authority of the truth, when once it is known and evident, is supreme.

truth shall make you free." All I said, in the latter part of my second sheet, is here summed up. I trust it might be shown, that it is a notion strictly harmonizing with the tenour of scripture; and I may venture to add, that it has the *greatest* earthly support, that of Lord Bacon. I refer you to that passage, in the end of the first book *De Augmentis*, (Oct. edit. vol. vii. p. 102.) which begins, "*Pergamus ab imperatoria*," &c.; but especially, that which immediately follows the quotation, "*Felix qui potuit*," &c. Above all, mark the concluding words of the paragraph, which speak of *veritas* and *bonitas* (truth and goodness). How admirably just is the remark, "*Nescit illiteratus, quid sit in se descendere, aut secum inire rationes, aut quam suavis vita sit, quæ indies sentit se fieri meliorem*"<sup>1</sup>; and how apposite to the very best of those, who are satisfied with grace or spirit, without truth. Is it not on exactly similar ground that St. Peter couples the *Ἀμαθεῖς* (unlearned), with the *Ἀσθήρικτοι* (unstable), and imputes to both so calamitous a tendency; and that St. Paul describes the *νήπιος* (babe), as *ἄπειρος λόγου δικαιοσύνης*<sup>2</sup>, and speaks—*σοφίαν ἐν τοῖς τελείοις*.<sup>3</sup>

I mentioned, that it was not unusual with the ancient writers, to speak of three states, *incipientis*, *proficientis*, *et perfecti*, (of the incipient, the proficient, and the perfect). A pious person of the twelfth century, by way of improving on this distribution, observes, that, *Incipientium status potest dici animalis; pro-*

<sup>1</sup> The unlearned man knows not what it is to descend into himself, or to call himself to account, nor the pleasure which arises from the daily consciousness of improvement.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. v. 13. Unskilful in the word of righteousness.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 6. Wisdom among them that are perfect.

ficientium rationalis; perfectorum spiritualis<sup>1</sup>: and afterwards, employing his own terms, he says, “*Vir spiritualis, et corpore suo spiritualiter utens, servitutem ejus (i. e. corporis), quam habet animalis homo per vim coactam, rationalis per consuetudinem subactam, accipere meretur quasi naturaliter affectam. Ubi illi (animali, aut incipienti) est obedientia necessitatis, iste (spiritualis aut perfectus) eam habet charitatis; ubi ille (incipiens) virtutes plenas laboris, iste (perfectus) habet eas versas in mores.*”<sup>2</sup>

Who this author is, I know not; his tract, *De Vita Solitaria*, has been preserved amongst those of St. Bernard. I quote him, because, in spite of his quaintness, he gives a clear view of the distinction in question, and such an one as substantially accords with the two petitions in the Litany. Nothing, I conceive, could be better contrasted, than both the principle and the practice in the two stages. In the inchoate, *necessitas*; and the result, — *virtutes plenæ laboris*<sup>3</sup>: in the perfect, *caritas*; and *virtutes versæ in mores*.<sup>4</sup> You perhaps see, by these specimens, that they who resolved to pray in concert with the ancients, could not, on such a point, but think with them also. I have allowed myself to enlarge, because I conceived you would not deem such venerable exemplifications of experimental piety, in any

<sup>1</sup> The state of incipients may be called animal; that of proficients, rational; that of the perfect, spiritual.

<sup>2</sup> A man who is spiritually minded, and employs his body in a spiritually-minded way, is rewarded, by receiving from his body, that service as a natural gift, which the animal man wrings from his by compulsion, and the rational man receives by dint of the force of custom. Where the animal man has the obedience of necessity, the spiritually-minded man has that of love; where the rational man has virtues full of painful effort, the spiritually-minded has them settled into habits.

<sup>3</sup> Virtues full of painful effort.

<sup>4</sup> Love and virtues settled into habits.

view, uninteresting. I acknowledge, to me they appear more energetic and more digested, than almost any thing I meet in writers since the Reformation. These last have their own peculiar merit. But, in very few indeed, do I find any resemblance to the philosophic depth of Augustine, or the seraphic glow of Chrysostom. Above all, in the writings of the ancients, religion seems their present heaven; were it not for them, I should scarcely know where to find the self-same spirit of piety, that the Psalms everywhere express. The devotion of the reformed Christians is honest and earnest; but it wants elevation. That of the ancients, appears to me to verify the Psalmist's prediction, "Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the Lord, that great is the glory of the Lord."

I attribute this to two causes: first, that their views were either natural or moral, — forensic notions never (at least never distinctly) entering their minds. Of this, the complaints of the Magdeburg Centuriators, formerly, and of Mr. Milner, in our own day, give conclusive evidence. Now, I humbly conceive, that a habit of mental exhilaration can only be maintained by natural, or moral views, and that it is most steady and most perfect when nourished by an apt union of both. But forensic notions cannot lastingly exhilarate, because, taking them at the best, they can only imply deliverance from an apprehended evil. And this, by the laws of our nature, is felt in its full force only at the first moment; the sense of evil, on which depends the exhilaration, necessarily grows weaker, the farther we remove from it. See, by the way, how naturally the forensic plan leads to a certain systematic retention of sin, since by that means only (I mean, by

the conscious continuance, or recurrence of the evil) can the feeling of consolation be kept sensibly vivid. But, in addition to this, forensic notions cannot cheer the mind, because their human archetypes (except to you, men of law!) have nothing intrinsically cheering. They are artificial,—therefore, meet no deep radical taste of the soul; nor can they, like other works of art, borrow charms from nature. They can be neither *dulcia* nor *pulchra*. Ceremonies and circumstances, fitted to excite awe, are the most that they can offer to the fancy. And these are amusing only to children. The truth is, that pure evil forms the basement of this superstructure, and, according to common feeling, the entire scheme is, the flying to one evil for refuge from another; to a less, from a greater. What ennobling effect, then, can these ideas produce, when transferred to religion? They may excite selfish dread, and may assist in conceiving an equally selfish relief; but, in the nature of things, what can they do more? I question not, that ideas of this kind are, to a certain extent, employed in the divine economy; because, in the Gospel, as well as under the law, low stages of mind, and, consequently, low habits of thinking and feeling, were to be provided for. In such cases, these representations may serve to rouse; but in no case can they elevate, delight, or morally enfranchise. By forensic views, however, I mean strictly those ideas which are borrowed from a court of human judicature, — such as guilt, condemnation, pardon, acquittal, &c.; and when I say, that they never distinctly entered into the minds of the ancients, I confine myself to their present theological application. For, in a certain moral accommodation of them, they did occur, — as, in all the views given

of the final judgment. And it may be also right to observe, that, in forensic ideas, those taken from polity at large, are by no means to be included. Without these last, heavenly things could not be expressed in human language, and there is no stage of the mind in which they are not necessary, both to represent certain relations in which we shall ever stand to God, and to add to our notions of those relations due grandeur. Christ is the judge and pardoner of sinners. But he is king of saints. Probably, also, the polity of earth is itself but the type of a glorious archetype in the invisible world. Government has many ends besides the administration of criminal jurisprudence. The *ἐνταξία*<sup>1</sup> of God's universal empire, doubtless affords matter of delightful contemplation to highest seraphim. It is remarkable, that St. Paul, who was caught up into the third heaven, gives the same titles to earthly magistrates, (Titus, iii. 1.) to angels, (Ephes. iii. 10.) and to devils, (Ephes. vi. 12.) *ἀρχαὶ καὶ ἐξουσίαι*<sup>2</sup>, with this only difference, that in the first instance, the words want, in the two latter they have, the article.

With these qualifications, I think I may adhere to my position, that the views of the ancient Christians were not forensic, but natural and moral; and I will leave to you to be judge, whether the direct pursuit of the sovereign good, and the loving contemplation of the supreme and perfect beauty,—reflected upon their minds by all the works of nature; exercised before them in all the movements of Providence, and, above all, substantiated to their imaginations, hearts, judgments; to every percep-

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<sup>1</sup> Good order.

<sup>2</sup> Principalities and powers.

tive and susceptible faculty and feeling, in the great and glorious facts, recorded in the written word, — whether, I say, this pursuit and this contemplation were not more likely to give wings to the inner man, and to diffuse a purpureum lumen around it, than any of the modern apprehensions, of being imperfectly regenerated and imputatively justified.

The second cause I have to assign, follows the other of course. It is, that the view of the ancients afforded, as well unbounded room, as irresistible motives for perpetual progress. It implied a plan of training, essentially progressive. And it insured the effect by opening to the view, such successive points of attainment, as were adequate to elicit and engage every power of the soul, and every capacity of the mind and heart. Here, I conceive, was the true provision for cheerfulness. Sameness is irksome, and confinement is painful. A landscape, with the noblest foreground, would not long please if it had no distances. What we look for, is

The scene outspread  
Beneath, beyond, and stretching far away  
From inland regions to the distant main.

But, if this be felt in matters sensible, how deeply must it hold good in objects of mind, and how infinitely in that object, which, in itself, extends beyond what “eye hath seen, or ear heard, or it hath entered into the heart to conceive.” To be coerced here, must be misery, if the mind be not fenced with insensibility. And yet there must be coercion, if points of possible progress are not distinctly apprehended. I am aware that modern theologists do not deny the possibility of progress to a certain extent; but they seldom venture to mark that extent, and they usually



throw in qualifications which leave a doubt, whether, after all, any real advancement is admitted. They say something about moving onward, but they do not point to any goal. I know there are individual exceptions; and, at this day, such instances are, probably, growing more numerous; (my fear about these has been intimated above). But I speak of the general method, since the Reformation, and I think I do not misrepresent it. In this state of things, there could not be animation, much less joy. Bacon's "*suavissima vita*," could not be known experimentally, where it was not so much as hoped for. I leave to yourself, to correct or fill up this gloomy sketch. What I have to assert is, that, in ancient times, all was the happy reverse. The prospect was unbounded, and the path "was" as the shining "light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day; way-marks, as distinct as they were progressively cheering, were recognized, and by these, travellers to the Mount Sion were encouraged to measure their advancement, and, where the result was clear, to rejoice in it with reverence." Thus constant progress was constant joy. And the consequence is, that they ever speak of the way in which they walk with delight and triumph. All the grandeur [of the Greek language seems scarcely adequate to do justice to the conceptions, which Basil and Chrysostom (particularly the latter) are ever forming of the liberty, the wisdom, and the happiness to which the Gospel calls and conducts its uncompromising votaries.

I suppose I should, at this day, retract little, if any thing, in that letter to Mr. Butterworth, of which you speak. In the intervening four years, I have

exercised my thoughts much on those subjects, and I am more and more persuaded, that in no instance does Divine Providence work more directly than in the arrangement of the visible church. I would ask, what is Providence, if the circumstances of the Christian Commonwealth are not regulated by its determination? There must be wheels and springs somewhere, by which prophetic events shall be realized in their season, and, of course, preparatory movements progressively produced and directed. But, where are those wheels and springs, if not in the mysterious variety of religious bodies? Among which the pertinacious steadiness of some, may be fully as necessary, toward the accomplishment of the great scheme, as the versatile activity of others. If new points are to be gained, old acquirements are not to be lost. The scribe, instructed into the Kingdom of Heaven, "brings out of his treasures, things new and old." But in what single instance at this day, could both functions be adequately provided for? Was it not then, worthy of Providence, when the ripeness of time came, to set one half of the Western Church loose, to go in search of new benefits, and to leave the other half on its old unaltered ground, in order, that by retaining every thing, it might lose nothing?

In this profound appointment, I think it is the destiny of the Church of England, to form an intermediate link. If future union of the whole were to be provided for; if the basis of a temperament were to be laid into which both extremes were finally to resolve themselves, such a measure would appear indispensable. In this view, old Lord Chatham's well known jeer at the established Church, as having a Popish liturgy, Calvinist articles, and an Arminian

Clergy, may have had in it far more of the nature of an encomium, than either he or his hearers were likely to imagine.

Dr. Campbell, in his Lectures on Ecclesiastical History (not a man generally after my mind), makes this just remark : — “ In the commencement of the Christian Church, two objects claimed attention ; the one, was the conversion of the world to the Messiah ; the other, not only the preservation of the converts, which should be made, but the securing of a continuance of the faith in their families. These two, though they concur in the ultimate end they are fitted to answer, — the glory of God in the salvation of men, — are very different in themselves, and require very different instruments and measures ;” than this, I conceive, nothing can be more true ; but how much more may be deducible from it, than Dr. Campbell made reckoning of !

I would ask, have ever these two objects ceased to be necessary, from the Christian era, to the present period ? Though professional Christianity be now general, practical Christianity has continued rare ; consequently, this latter required to be kept up by individual conversion ; and clearly, professional Christianity, needs as much as ever to be maintained by hereditary transmission.

Here, then, I conceive, we see an obvious necessity for the two-fold system of sects and establishments. The sects have been necessary, for the purpose of re-exciting, what our blessed Lord in the 4th of St. John, calls spirit ; and establishments have been equally indispensable as depositories and guards, of what, on the same occasion, he terms truth.

I do not mean to say, that sects serve no other purpose, nor would I assert, that a separate society

is the fittest for the above purpose. On the contrary, the re-exciting function, from the time of Constantine, until the eighth century, seems to have been performed, by societies not in separation, — namely, by monastic and eremitical institutions ; and, again, I am not sure, whether extended re-excitement, was any remarkable consequence of the sectarian movements, from the eighth century, to the Reformation. These movements were necessary, for an object different from present excitation. They had principally a prospective relation, to the great event in the sixteenth century. I doubt not, however, that they also had, to a certain degree, an exciting effect. Roman Catholic writers have repeatedly borne witness to their exemplary morals, and though their piety seems to have been strict and sincere, rather than elevated, it could hardly fail to have a useful influence, on those who witnessed it ; if not in a way of communication, at least, in a way of emulation. Besides, Protestantism (strictly so called), to which those sects were precursors, is substantially, a method of excitement : it arose with re-awakened activity of intellect ; it keeps pace with that activity ; its leading principle is to make each individual intellectually active in matters of religion ; and because all this, is, too surely, not piety, Protestantism has had its own subordinate apparatus for pious excitement, in the successive movements of Puritans, Pietists, and Methodists. In these last instances, we ourselves may see enough to conceive the reason of this providential provision.

Granting then every utility to this entire exciting scheme, still, if there were nothing in the religious world of a more permanent, a less versatile character, where would be the agency for “securing a con-

tinuance of the faith in families," or for preserving in its integrity, what our Saviour has termed truth? Look round Protestant Europe, and find out an instance of steadiness in belief. Have not whole communions, in some instances, given up their first confessions of faith; and, where these are retained, what are they but a dead letter? But look at home, and find (out of the establishment) instances, to any amount, of identity in religious opinion, through two generations. What could happen, but that individuals so claiming to judge for themselves, and hitherto so incompetent to apply, or even find a standard, should run into boundless variety, and, of course, infinite confusion? At present, I allow, this effect has not fully taken place. But forgive me for declaring freely, that I seem to myself, every where, to see divergement from the first line taken: and, no where do I see a boundary, to restrain the consequent aberration.

Will the Bible answer this end? Alas! when did it answer such an end? Has not every vacillation of Protestantism occurred, with the Bible in men's hands? Did the Bible prevent the declension of the Puritans, first in religious strictness, then in religious belief? If I know my own heart, I am, on this, as on every point, an honest seeker after truth. But how can I rely on the invaluable Scripture for an effect, which, to appearance, it has never yet pleased Providence to work, through its mere instrumentality? How can I rely on the Scripture for keeping multitudes in the same mind, from generation to generation, when, at the present hour, I scarcely see any two independent thinkers, exactly in the same mind about its meaning? I mean to exaggerate nothing; but, viewing every thing that I can

view, and as candidly as I can, I see no pledge, no adequate means, for the continuity of truth, in an unestablished, unhierarchical communion. What would be the fate of Christendom, if there were no provision for supplying so deep a deficiency? But, I conceive, such a provision has always existed, and still exists, where so many worthy persons would least expect to find it. Yes, in the midst of a mass of strange opinions, and stranger ceremonies, a current of unvitiated, unabated truth, flows steadily down from age to age, widening as it flows, and yet losing nothing either of its depth or clearness. The plain fact, I conceive, is, that, because nothing whatever has been parted with, nothing valuable has been lost; a result which, I think, abundantly explains, the otherwise mysterious permission of inveterate error. For, what comparison is there between the grossest error, which is consistent with vital truth, and the least mutilation or adulteration of that truth? And what could more evince the agency of Infinite Wisdom, than the making even these gross errors subservient, to the security, and continuity of truth?

I can but touch this point; and yet how, in thus barely touching it, can I hope to escape the charge of monstrous paradox? Yet see, whether my assertion can be denied. The Roman Catholic Church has carefully preserved the writings of the Fathers; and it has bound itself, by irrevocable pledges, to abide by their concurrent sense, in all matters of faith and piety. How shall we try its fidelity to this engagement? Is it by dwelling upon apparent contrarieties? The cause would, in this way, assuredly go against the Roman Catholic Church; but I object to such a method: I think we must examine the piety which has been produced. Both soil and culture are best

judged of, by the fruit. PIETY IS THE GRAND OBJECT. Τὸ τέλος τῆς παραγγελίας, ἐστὶν ἀγάπη.<sup>1</sup> Has, then, the piety of the ancient Church, been preserved in the Roman Catholic Church? This is simply the question to be asked; and the answer, on the most impartial investigation, I think must be, that in no other instance has it been equally preserved, except in the formularies of the Church of England. In these last, it is necessarily preserved, as they are themselves, for the most part, ancient compositions. In the writings of pious Roman Catholic divines, it exists substantially, in congenial sentiments, and phraseology not dissimilar, often identical.

I need scarcely observe, that my remark extends, to thoroughly pious Roman Catholic divines only: to fashionable, though somewhat devout preachers, such as Massillon, and Bourdaloue, it would not strictly apply. Massillon resembles the Fathers in his doctrine, but not exactly in his spirit. Bourdaloue is continually quoting them, but not always following them. He was a Jesuit; and Jesuits had a way of their own. Besides, both were court-preachers; and it is said, οἱ τὰ μαλακὰ φοροῦντες, ἐν τοῖς οἴκοις τῶν βασιλέων εἰσὶν.<sup>2</sup> To make the trial fairly, we must be sure that the writer was in earnest: so sure as we find such an author, in that Church, we find a disciple of the Fathers.

If it should be asked, what is the common character, that most signally distinguishes the ancient Fathers, and these their closest followers, —from Protestant writers, of equally sincere piety? I should answer, that Protestant writers, in general, (“rooted and grounded Church-of-England-men” excepted,)

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. i. 5. The end of the commandment is charity.

<sup>2</sup> S. Matt. xi. 8. They that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses.

are almost always in a state, either of captivity, or hostility, to a speculative theology; in consequence of which, they see divine objects, not exactly as they are in themselves, but through more or less of a discolouring, and perhaps warping medium: whereas, the Fathers, instead of forming speculations, consulted human nature. This, they knew, was the subject to be wrought upon; to this, they concluded, every thing in the evangelic economy must be adapted: this, therefore, in subordination to the Spirit of God, they took as their interpreter of Scripture. Their views of Christianity have, consequently, reached all the depths of human nature, and extend to all its capacities. They lay their foundations in the former; and their superstructure rises to all the height of the latter. This, it appears to me, is their just description: they were philosophers in the truest sense, as well as in the noblest department; they were experimentalists in God's moral laboratory, whose knowledge was not hypothesis, but induction. I do not, in these high respects, class the Roman Catholic divines with them. These latter are not so much their *συμμύσται*, as their implicit followers. Where the Fathers concur, the Roman Catholic recognizes the voice of the church; and, however accurately he inquires, it is in subordination to this authority.

The speculations of St. Augustine may be thought an important exception, to the account just given of the philosophy of the Fathers; but, whatever were his opinions, they in no respect disturbed the system already established. It was elucidated by his just and deep reasoning, and not injured by his singularities, even adopted, as they were, by many who came after him. In fact, that which may properly be called the Augustinian system, added strength to



the inner system of truth, as a buttress adds strength to a wall. The beauty was impaired, but the security was greater. But there was a still farther compensation: if St. Augustine's extrinsic adjuncts appeared cumbrous, his internal arrangements are admirable. No man, after the apostles, was so well entitled to adopt St. Paul's words, "As a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation." It seems to have been his high allotment, to reduce, for the first time (after St. Paul), to complete philosophical regularity, the στοιχεῖα τῆς ἀρχῆς τῶν λογίων τοῦ Θεοῦ.<sup>1</sup> In what he he has done, therefore, we see, as it were, materials which had been already collected, wrought together into the basement of a magnificent structure, and even the superstructure itself so far carried on, as to give a clear idea of the beautiful order in which it is to proceed; we perceive all the begun members and features of the architecture, which may be advanced to any height, by following the pattern thus exquisitely furnished. See what Mr. Milner says of St. Augustine, in the beginning of his account of him: Church Hist. vol. ii. 323. Much as he says, I would take little from it. But see, also, what he is obliged to say, respecting his doctrine of justification, p. 502. I lament only, that he who saw, and truly saw, so much in St. Augustine, should have seen so little to interest him, in the sublime piety of Chrysostom: one hundred and eighty-seven pages being given to the one, and scarcely twenty-five to the other.

It is remarkable, however, that, ever since his own day, St. Augustine has been the chief doctor of the Western Church; and to this attachment, more than

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<sup>1</sup> Heb. v. 12. The first principles of the oracles of God.

to any other single cause, I ascribe the wondrous experimentality of devout Roman Catholic writers. The genius of St. Augustine has, under Divine Providence, been the guard of Roman Catholic orthodoxy. The schoolmen, subtle as they were, could not supplant him. He not only stood on that Rock, against which the gates of hell were never to prevail ; but he had, by anticipation, triumphed over those dialectic champions, in a more powerful use of their own weapons. The great attack was reserved for the Jesuits ; but, in their efforts to pull down St. Augustine, they eventually annihilated themselves. Suffer me to give a specimen (from an excellent author of the seventeenth century, which I happen to have at hand) of the exactness with which the pious and learned Roman Catholic divines exemplify, the spirit of the ancient writers. He from whom I quote, is the well-known Cardinal Bona. He is speaking of errors incident to those, who aim at contemplation. He says, "*Alii denique subtilioris ingenii nudis discursibus et speculationibus intellectûs contenti, posse se illis Deum possidere existimant, sine amore, qui nos similes Deo facit : et hi similes sunt antiquis philosophis, evanescentes in cogitationibus suis, et colentes pro Deo suo phantasmata sua. Quælibet enim speculatio intellectûs est quid humanum, quod nos in proprio carcere vinctos detinet : amor autem est quid divinum, quod elevat, et rapit extra nos, atque in Deum transformat.*"<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Others again, of a more subtle mind, rest satisfied with mere abstract reasonings and intellectual speculations ; supposing that, by means of these, they shall be able to attain to God, albeit they have no love, which makes us like God. These, like the philosophers of antiquity, have become vain in their imaginations, and worship, instead of their God, the creatures of their own fancy. For intellectual speculation, be it as lofty as it may, is still a thing merely human, which detains us in the bondage of our natural prison. Whereas love, is something divine, which exalts us, hurries us out of ourselves, and transforms us into God.  
— *Via Compendii ad Deum*, cap. ix. § 2.

This last expression is too bold ; it is not from the Fathers, but from the Mystics. There seems clearly, however, no extravagance of meaning, as the sense of these last words is fixed by those that immediately precede.

I wish to add one passage more : — “ *Ex cognitione verò accenditur amor, et vicissim ex amore ipsa crescit cognitio. Amor enim ignis est ardens et lucens ; et ardens in voluntate lumen intellectionis : impellitque nos ad ibi figendos oculos, ubi est thesaurus, quem diligit cor nostrum, cujus bonitas et pulchritudo, cum sit immensa et infinita, aciores iterum amoris flammæ in corde succendit, ex quibus crescit videndi desiderium ; nec ullus est finis, donec anima Dilecto adhæreat et unus fiat cum eo spiritus in eternum.*”<sup>1</sup>

Compare this, if you please, with the passage of Augustine, transcribed from Peter Lombard. The fact is, that, in spite of mysticism, which, in the centuries after the twelfth, more or less took possession of every pious person, the Fathers were studied, their spirit was imbibed, and the substance of their sense exhibited. The consequence has been, that, even in that corrupted establishment, the inward, experimental life of religion, and established radication and maturity in that life, have been more undeviatingly, and more luminously maintained, than in any other (externally

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<sup>1</sup> It is by knowledge that love is kindled ; and, reciprocally, love makes knowledge to increase. For love is a burning and shining fire ; and, burning in the will, it enlightens the understanding, and disposes us to fix our eyes, where the treasure is, which our hearts love ; the excellency and beauty of which, being, as it is, immeasurable and boundless, lights up still fiercer flames of love in the heart, by which the craving after actual vision is increased ; and there is no end, till the soul fixes itself on the Beloved, and becomes one spirit therewith to all eternity. — *Via Compendii ad Deum*, cap. ix. § 4.

better ordered) communion. And in the formularies, at least, of our church, there is of necessity the same recognition, because they are themselves a part of that model, which has been the means of continued uniformity in the instances now referred to.

In all this, I seem to myself to see a wonderful provision of overruling Wisdom. Mutable things have been left mutable; improvable things have been left improvable: but whatever is necessary to be known, in order to a Christian's fullest advancement, has been kept discernible, definite, accessible, and efficient, through successive ages, to the present day, by a concurrence of agencies, which divine guidance alone could have directed to one common end. Had our religion implied nothing but the belief of propositions, or the adherence to rules of outward action, a distinct promulgation, in the first instance, of such propositions, and such rules, would have been the whole of that, which the design required. But Christianity being, in its vital essence, neither propositions, nor rules, but energetic influences, and proportionably marked results (the former acting upon, the latter produced in, the deepest springs of human nature), the true idea of such an operative plan could be conceived, only by means of authenticated, and sufficiently repeated exemplifications. This would form the only adequate comment on the evangelic oracles. Where a practical process was the matter intended, little else could be given, beforehand, but a prospective theory; and when this theory, both from its own nature, and that of the subject to be wrought upon, was peculiarly difficult and profound, how could it be made intelligible but by practical elucidation?

Such an elucidation, I certainly think, is furnished,

in that continued testimony to experimental truth, which we find in the ancient Fathers, and their subsequent disciples. I conceive that this unbroken series of evidence, irrefragably fixes the interior sense of the New Testament writers, demonstrates the vital efficiency of our divine religion, and throws, even upon the deep things of God, a light the most illustrative, the most steady, and the most cheering. In fact, this recurrence to a Christian "cloud of witnesses," in addition to those more ancient examples placed before us in the eleventh to the Hebrews, is only to follow up, in our situation, the selfsame principle, which St. Paul acted on, in his day; with the advantage, on our part, of having to contemplate instances far more numerous, of inexpressibly deeper wisdom, and more exalted virtue.

I am aware that I am making observations perfectly out of the common line; but I rest confident I am making them to one, who will not be prejudiced by their novelty. In plain truth, I think that the neglect of these views is the grand defect, in modern Protestant piety. In overlooking all that God has been doing in his church for seventeen ages, and in attending solely to the mere unillustrated word, they seem to me systematically to consign themselves to a perpetual infancy in religion, and to do, without intending it, the greatest injustice to the sacred word, which could be offered to it by well-meaning men. They may, I allow, be thus deficient, and yet possess and practise the religion of the heart. If it were not so, the path of piety must have been untrodden amongst Protestants; which happily, we know, has not been the case. But it is no less a fact, that in general they have gone on well, only when nothing has occurred to seduce them from their simplicity.

They have remained devout, just so long as they were contented with being only devout. Whenever they have aimed at being wise, rapid divergement has been, I conceive, the uniform consequence. I allow these declensions have been, in a certain degree, compensated by re-invigorations. But, in every one of these that has yet occurred, the same defect prognosticates similar divergement and decay. I cannot but persuade myself, that a just regard to the point on which I have been dwelling, would produce a perfectly new state of things ; a state in which divergement would be morally impossible, and in which, even re-invigoration would be superseded by settled healthfulness, spreading itself more and more throughout the Christian world.

Would it be possible, for instance, to persuade any one conversant with ancient Christianity, that experimental religion was to be regarded with jealousy, as being, if not absolutely fanatical, at least akin to fanaticism? Could such a one be brought to think, that the religious strictness, which devout societies cultivate so carefully in their earlier stages, is an excess which may be safely abated, without actual relinquishment of a religious life? Would it be possible to make him listen, for one minute, to reasonings against the Trinity, the proper Godhead of the Son, or the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit? Or would he be equally liable, with so many fair beginners, after having "tasted of the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come," to loiter in his course, to aim at no higher attainment, but quietly lay his head upon the pillow of some composing opinion?

On the contrary, having the Divine scheme spread out before the eye of his mind, in all its variety, its

harmony, and its magnificence ; tracing, through the vast retrospect, at once the steadiest uniformity, and the most pregnant progressiveness ; impressed, by all that he contemplates, that the one design of the glorious Author, and ever-present Worker, is to raise the spirit of man from all that is narrow, or base, or earthly, — all that either defiles or imprisons it, — to all that is pure, and holy, and heavenly, — to that knowledge of God, which is wisdom, and that love of God, which is happiness ; and beholding the rise, the progress, and the maturity of this internal process realized, with substantial, undeviating sameness, through every age, in countless witnesses, — he can no longer waver or hesitate as to the part he is to choose, or the path in which he is to walk, or the construction he is to put on that sacred word, which, thus elucidated, he finds, in the noblest and most exalted sense, able to make him wise unto salvation.

Do I mean, in all this, to plead for a re-assumption of that mental yoke, from which the Reformation freed us ; and which holds the Roman Catholic Church, still, in implicit submissiveness to antiquity ? In truth, I do not. Implicit submissiveness is one extreme, and contemptuous inattention is another. If the former is the extreme of Roman Catholics, the latter has been no less the extreme of the generality of Protestants ; and my wish is, to reclaim Protestants from the extreme into which they have gone, without, in any respect, precipitating them into the opposite scheme. I would not lessen any man's respect for the written word of God. God forbid ! But I would rationalize, enlighten, and exalt that respect, by making it acknowledge God equally, wherever he shows himself ; and especially to regard his own com-

ment, on what He said once for all, afforded in explanatory working, during eighteen hundred years.

I would wish the Protestant to rationalize the Roman Catholic, by first rationalizing himself. One extreme generates another, not only by a law of nature, but, as it were, for a necessary end; because the recurrence to a safe medium could not otherwise be provided for. To find this safe medium, is my object. I grant, the Roman Catholics are in a state of mental slavery; but let not Protestants, therefore, affect mental savageness, which, through fear of being enslaved, rejects all means of melioration. Let, rather, the Protestants of this advanced and influential empire seek after, and adopt, the only wise temperament; and they will speedily attract both the opposite sides, to this centre of luminous tranquillity.

I assure you I do not mean to indulge fancy; but the more I have considered this subject, the stronger has been my conviction, that the defect I point to occasions numerous consequent defects, throughout the whole of the Christian life. Want of steadiness, I have spoken of; but there must be, also, I conceive, a comparative want of religious mental occupation. To make the exercise of thought, here, as elsewhere, interesting, there must be variety. I must not repeat what I said in my last letter; but, admitting the necessity of this provision, where can it be looked for so hopefully, as within the sphere of God's most constant, most connected, most highly wrought operation? the living results of which stand there, before us, to animate us by their example, to cheer us by their company, to warm us by their piety, to enlighten us by their wisdom, to establish us by their concurrence, and to delight us by their variety.



What St. Paul said of Abel, he clearly meant to hold good of all that followed: — “Being dead, he yet speaketh.” And most truly does it hold good here! Surely to add this contemplation to infinitely higher ones, was what St. Paul meant to urge, when he tells the Hebrews, not that they shall come hereafter, but that they have already come (*προσεληλύθατε*) “to the general assembly and church of the first-born, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,” as well as “to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, and to God, the Judge of all.” It was the delightful sensation, which the retrospect he had just taken inspired, that must have dictated these *ἔπεα πτερόεντα*; and (as I already observed) does he not do it, to lead us, by his example, to recur habitually, in our successive ages, to the same exalted and exalting contemplation, the matter of which was to receive such vast enlargement, and such growing enrichment, under the dispensation just then opening on the world?

Religion must, in order to work its full effect, give employment to every mental faculty, and attraction to every natural feeling. Our reason goes to the past, for evidences and illustrations of truth; our imagination takes the same flight, to find matter for the most endearing pleasures; and in no other instance, does the pursuit of pleasure contribute more, to the service of truth, and the interest of virtue. Every thing here has a charm, and such a charm as enlarges and elevates the mind, more, perhaps, than any other influence, not intrinsically moral. It stands nearest to what is moral; partaking much of the nature of the *πραγμάτων ἔλεγχος οὐ βλεπομένων*.<sup>1</sup> In truth, the sacred word itself is exquisitely adapted to

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<sup>1</sup> Heb. xi. 1. The evidence of things not seen.

this tendency of our intellectual nature ; no other record of antiquity affording to the imagination, either so interesting, so diversified, or so immense a retrospect. With this eminently divine provision, it is most certain, nothing can be, in any view, comparable. It has properties which exalt it inexpressibly above every other similar means of representation. Still, subsequently to the close of the divinely recorded periods, the same substantial work went on. Luminaries of pure, steady, though less brilliant lustre, appeared, successively, in the hemisphere of the church ; and, under the same ever-present superintendence, they bore witness to the truth, both in their teaching, and in their lives. The first signs and wonders did not, indeed, accompany their word ; because they were commissioned only to elucidate and enforce, what had been thus confirmed already. *They* were those faithful men, whom St. Paul provides for, and recognizes, in his direction to Timothy (2 Tim. ii. 2.), as successively to occupy the place of stars, in the right hand of the Redeemer. When the work proceeds thus, and when, under Divine Providence, its venerable records have been preserved to us, can we doubt, that we are to make a use of them, analogous, though strictly subordinate, to that which we make of the earlier, infallible memorials ? I grant that, to these last, we are to *submit* our understanding ; but are we not to *exercise* our understanding upon the other ?

What, however, I wish chiefly to remark is, that, in the continued provision, which the series of writings now referred to implies, (the wonderful preservation of which, we can attribute only to the care of overruling Heaven,) we have exactly that uninterrupted, and yet diversified range for the mind, which

equally meets our taste, and accords with the Divine method already pursued. Without this continuance of the retrospect, we should have to contemplate the grand objects of our religion, across a trackless waste of seventeen centuries. Whereas, by valuing and rightly using the intermediate aids, with which Providence has furnished us, we need meet no desert; we may travel upward, through a valley, whose "pools are filled with water," and where, at every stage, we meet with friends and guides, who appear to have been placed at their successive posts, as if for the purpose of affording, to the mental traveller, all possible direction and encouragement.

I believe I state nothing, which would not be borne witness to by the feelings of every capable mind, which has wisely availed itself of these assistances. To me, the whole entablature of Christianity appears to be thus filled up, and a satisfaction afforded to the enquiring spirit of man, of which it might be difficult to pronounce, whether it is more certain, or more delightful. To the understanding and judgment, it is experience (or what St. Paul terms *ἐπίγνωσις*<sup>1</sup>) on the greatest possible scale; answering to that of the tried and matured individual Christian, as the motion of the earth in its orbit, answers to its rotation on its axis. It is a portion, and to us of later times an essential ingredient, of what St. Paul calls *ἡ πληροφωρία τῆς συνέσεως*.<sup>2</sup> In like manner, it is, to the heart, a portion, and, I should think, to us an essential ingredient, of the *πληροφωρία πίστεως*.<sup>3</sup> The vitality of faith is expressed in that text, *μὴ σκοπούντων ἡμῶν τὰ βλεπόμενα*,

<sup>1</sup> Rom. iii. 20. Col. i. 9. <sup>2</sup> Tim. iii. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Col. ii. 2. The full assurance of understanding.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. x. 22. Full assurance of faith.

ἀλλὰ τὰ μὴ βλεπόμενα.<sup>1</sup> But how can the habit, here described, advance toward perfection, except objects of faith come more and more within the mental horizon? If, amid so many visible objects, we have but few invisible objects to turn to, the exercise of faith must be not only morally, but intellectually difficult; but, in proportion as invisible objects open more extensively to our mind's eye, the intellectual difficulty decreases, till, at length, the weight even of natural attraction is on the side of the unseen world. And let not this be deemed an enlargement, rather of fancy, than of faith. What I have quoted from Heb. xii., proves the view in question to come most strictly within the objects of faith; but this is, if possible, still more firmly established, by what St. Paul says to the Ephesians, in the close of the second chapter. The titles of honour which he gives them are, *συμπολῖται τῶν ἁγίων, καὶ οἰκεῖοι τοῦ Θεοῦ*<sup>2</sup>; and, elsewhere, he has said, *Ἡμῶν τὸ πολίτευμα ἐν οὐρανοῖς ὑπάρχει*.<sup>3</sup> It follows, 1. That the *ἁγίοι* with whom we are *συμπολῖται*, are *peculiarly the invisible ἁγίοι*. 2. That to think of these, our fellow-citizens, and cultivate our relation to them, must be a true exercise of faith: and, 3. That this very exercise, is a natural, if not essential part, of the *πολίτευμα ἐν οὐρανοῖς*.

I cannot but observe, that St. Paul's expressions, in the verse immediately following that quoted from the Ephesians, state a still closer connection than that of fellow citizens, between us, and "the spirits of the just made perfect." On those of them who took the

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 18. While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. ii. 19. Fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.

<sup>3</sup> Phil. iii. 20. Our citizenship is in heaven.

lead in both Testaments we are built, as stones in a house are built on their foundation: *ἐποικοδομηθέντες ἐπὶ τῷ θεμελίῳ τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ προφητῶν*.<sup>1</sup> But if so, it follows by the strictest analogy, that we are built also, in a certain sense, on all who have come after; that is, as the range of a building, last laid on, is built on all the preceding ranges. This is directly intimated in the next verse, when we are told, that *πᾶσα ἡ οἰκοδομή, συναρμολογουμένη, αὖξαι εἰς ναὸν ἅγιον ἐν Κυρίῳ*.<sup>2</sup> All the parts must be fitted to their chief corner stone, which knits the whole; but, that this may be ensured, they must be adjusted also to each other; and, from this adjustment being exactly preserved, arises that unity of effect, which the great design requires. Nothing less than this meaning can be conveyed in the expression, *συναρμολογουμένη αὖξαι*: the participle used here, being clearly as strong and full a term, as the most copious of languages could have supplied. It is, therefore, not said in vain. It evidently implies a duty, in each fresh range of "living stones," to harmonize themselves with all the lower ranges; and, consequently, not to take the foundation only for their rule, but to attend strictly to the whole intermediate work; since, by an oversight here, they may at least fail in contributing to the harmonic advancement of the structure. Compare this passage with the corresponding passage, Ephes. iv. 16., and observe, that, in the latter, each part is expressly declared to be contributory to the growth of the whole. This fact is stated with more than usual energy. And though, doubtless, an exhortation was thus given, to the Christians then

<sup>1</sup> Eph. ii. 20. Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets.

<sup>2</sup> ——— 21. All the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord.

living at Ephesus, the truth of the position cannot be confined to a single church, or a single generation, especially considering what had been already said, in the 11th, 12th, and 13th verses: on the contrary, the idea suggested jointly by these passages, is as extensive as it is pregnant; it implies a compacted work, at once συναρμολογούμενον καὶ συμβιβαζόμενον<sup>1</sup>, going on, through successive ages, to a glorious issue; it makes the advancement of this work depend on general co-operation; and it consequently enjoins, on each part, an obligation, both to receive aid from the rest, and contribute its aid to the rest. The general duty is expressed in these words: ἀληθεύοντες ἐν ἀγάπῃ, which I would paraphrase; “pursuing truth, (that truth which must be added to spirit,) both with mind and affection.” This falls in with St. Augustine’s *RATIO*; and accords, I conceive, with many of the remarks which I have hazarded. It is remarkable also, that the immediate benefit which St. Paul looks for, is settledness, (verse 14.); with clearest intimation, that incalculable unsettledness will be incident to those, who do not proceed onward, from the simplicity of pious sentiment, to a study of God’s great designs, an improvement of all the means of wisdom which God has furnished, and an establishment in that truth, which accords, alike, with God’s word, and His providence; and alone, both harmonizes, and cements, the great mystical temple.

This subject has led me on, far beyond my intention. I purposed giving but a few hints, and it is growing into an essay. You may possibly now ask, what has all this to do with the use of establishments? My answer would be, that this sameness,

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<sup>1</sup> Fitly framed together. Eph. ii. 21. Knit together. Col. ii. 19.

continuity, and, at the same time, regular progress of truth, could not have been secured, without external fences, and continuative ties, too strong to yield to vicissitudes of times, to collision of nations, or even to the well-meant efforts of good, but mistaken men. An establishment alone, I conceive, affords these provisions : but not every thing called an establishment. What I intend by this term, consists far more in the interior organization, than in any external alliance. An Hierarchical Church has the nature of an establishment, whether it is, or is not allied with the state. On the other hand, a body of mere presbyters, let them marshal themselves as they may, or let them have whatever support from the state, seems to me to want the essence of an establishment. In such a system, the majority told by the head, or an oligarchy equally incalculable, rules every thing. There is no efficient check, no practical responsibility, no change-repelling instinct, above all, no congenializing connection with antiquity. Episcopacy implies all these. And accordingly, while the unepiscopal communions of Europe have been changing their principles, with varying times and circumstances, the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland has retained its entire system, without warp or circumstantial mutilation, through 250 years of discountenance and persecution.

Connection with the state is, doubtless, a farther pledge for continuity. Ecclesiastical aristocracy derived a higher tone, from a conjunction with secular aristocracy. And the possession of honours and emoluments, increased the instinctive resistance to innovation. "The very papal power and grandeur," says Richard Baxter, "which hath corrupted the Church, hath yet been a check to some that

would have assaulted it by force : and, as a hedge of thorns about it. Worldly interest engageth Pope, Patriarchs, and Prelates, to stand up for the Christian religion, because they gain by it." Church Hist. page 18. Besides this, the jealousies of statesmen may possibly, on some occasions, supply a defect of vigilance in Churchmen ; and that may be retained, through the caution of the former, which might not be adequately valued by the latter. The Church of England affords elucidations of this remark : Baxter's strong observation coincides with it. " God can make use of a surly porter to keep his doors ; yea, a mastiff dog may be a keeper of the house." Ibid. p. 19.



LETTER TO D. PARKEN, ESQ. ON THE LEADING CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES, AS ELUCIDATED BY EVENTS IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

Dublin, March 10. 1812.

MY DEAR SIR,

I HAVE been wishing to say a few words to you, these two months; that is, ever since the receipt of yours of the 5th of Jan.; and be assured, inattention had no share in creating the delay. The real cause has been, occupation of thought. I get into a train of thinking, somewhat in Horace's way—"Condo et compono quæ mox depromere possim, (the word *mox*, however, being taken in its fullest latitude) and then I find it difficult to break my thread; or rather fear the difficulty, if it were broken, of adroitly casting a knot. This is the simple cause, and always will be, I think, of my omissions, when I might be expected to write. At this moment, I lay down papers, to take up this sheet: but I happen not to be afraid of losing my path; and I have one or two observations to offer, which, if not now communicated, might come too late.

Let me, in the first place, thank you for the excellent little tract. I am gratified by your finding in it a likeness to my sentiments. There are a few, and but a few words in it, that I could wish to have been other than they are; but in substance, and, indeed, almost every where, even in its language, it is the most interesting portraiture of goodness in humble life, that I have seen come from our Church or Nation. I think myself it does illustrate the su-

periority of undoctinal piety; and furnishes a most comfortable specimen and pledge of what characters may be formed, and even what conversions may be effected, when teachers of religion have come to think with St. Paul, that “neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but *ἡ καινὴ κτίσις*.”<sup>1</sup> I must not enlarge here. It is a “matter” of which my heart “is continually inditing;” and more and more am I persuaded, that the religious man must ever be liable to be more or less of the *ἀνὴρ δίψυχος*<sup>2</sup>, until men have learned *τῷ κανονι τούτῳ στοιχεῖν*<sup>3</sup>, or, indeed, our Lord’s own invaluable Canon — *Ἐνός ἐστι χρεῖα*.<sup>4</sup> And what is that *τὸ ἐν*? Has he not told us, in words which are the consummation of Divinity, and the sum of Philosophy — *Μακάριοι οἱ καθαροὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ, ὅτι αὐτοὶ τὸν Θεὸν ὁψονται*.<sup>5</sup> This, and Himself (*τὸ ὁδὸς, ἡ ἀλήθεια, καὶ ἡ ζωὴ*)<sup>6</sup> are all.

As to the Calvinists being the publishers, it does not surprise me; for, to my apprehension, a certain change is stealthily creeping upon them. Less, indeed, on those within the establishment, than on those in separate bodies. There is a railing at the top of the slope, in the one case; while, in the other, all is open. In an establishment (while it lasts) men sail only as it were between north and south, and can, of course, take an observation. In sects, men sail between east and west, and must depend on their time-keepers. Andrew Fuller thinks himself a right good Calvinist; and yet, in his Letters on San-

1 2 Cor. v. 17. Gal. vi. 15. The new creature.

2 S. James, i. 8. Double minded man.

3 Gal. vi. 16. To walk by this rule.

4 S. Luke, x. 42. One thing is needful.

5 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. S. Matt. v. 19.

6 The way, the truth, and the life. S. John, xiv. 6.

demanianism, he maintains, what, I am ready to think, cuts up Calvinistic justification by the roots. If you do not know the tract I allude to, read it; especially the 6th, 7th, and 8th letters; and judge whether the substance of that which I have brought before you, is not repeatedly admitted and insisted on; namely, that the faith which justifies before God, is not a mere fiducial act, but a vital grace; (because, says he, without “living faith, or faith that worketh by love, we could not be united to a living Redeemer,”—p. 164. ;) that it justifies us “as being holy,” because, if it be holy, in relation to sanctification, it must be holy in itself; and that which “is holy in itself, must be holy in every relation which it sustains,” — p. 156.; that faith, then only unites us to Christ, when it implies “congeniality of disposition, and makes our heart as Christ’s heart;” since “he that hath the Son, hath life;” and that seeming difficulties, on grounds of desert or reward (apparently contrary to the gratuitousness of justification) are done away by this fact, that “Faith itself is the gift of God;” “the union, though we be active in it,” being, “in reality, formed by him who actuates us, and to him belongs the praise.” — p. 169. He adds, here and there, what I could not subscribe; but I think he admits, either directly, or by plain implication, what I contend for. I have also before me, at this moment, a curious little publication, “Posthumous Essays,” by Abraham Booth. This man was so high a Calvinist, as to be Andrew Fuller’s chief opponent; and yet he frankly acknowledges, p. 37., that it is not expressly “said in the Divine Volume, that God is reconciled to us by the death of Christ; but that we are, by his death, reconciled to God.” In Romans v. 10., he would wish still to understand

κατηλλάγημεν τῷ Θεῷ (we were reconciled to God), in the old way; yet he candidly owns the repetition of this term, in the same verse, in the participial form — πολλῶ μᾶλλον καταλλαγέντες (much more having been reconciled), to “respect, if he mistakes not, the reconciliation of man to God, by the renovation of his desperately depraved heart;” as if it were possible, that the logical head of St. Paul (to say nothing of higher guidance) should understand the leading word in his argument, one way in his premises, and another way in his conclusion! Booth also asserts, that a desire of grace, then only implies the reality of grace, when the mind “sees and approves the beauty of holiness,” and desires the sanctifying influence of the “Holy Spirit, that the great end, of communicating those influences, may be fully answered;” “since, to desire Christ and grace, merely because we tremble at the apprehension of damnation, and know that we cannot be saved without the great atonement, and the regenerating energy of the Holy Spirit, has nothing spiritual in it.” — p. 19. In the same spirit, he had said before, that to resolve those eternal decrees, which constitute the “great plan of providence, into the divine will, without regarding the unerring dictates of the divine understanding, is neither the doctrine of Scripture, nor agreeable to the character of Him who is the supreme Lord; is to represent Him under the notion of an Eastern despot, rather than give us a just conception of God only wise.” — p. 10. I do not wish to attach, to such language, more than its necessary meaning; but so understanding it, it does not seem to me to be exactly old Calvinism. It rather resembles the style of talking, which Baxter, and other disputants against Antinomian laxity, introduced, in

the latter part of the seventeenth century, among the presbyterians. What Baxter was then, Jonathan Edwards appears to have been in our day. I think I see the teaching of Edwards, both in Fuller and Booth. Distinctly in the latter; and, perhaps, even more deeply in Fuller. To me, who believe that all these movements are as exactly arranged, as if they were produced by clockwork, Jonathan Edwards appears a wonderful phenomenon; and so also does Baxter. But the immediate consequences of Baxter's theological philosophy, were of a mixed nature; perhaps, rather predominantly evil. In his views, began that method of rationalizing, which led at length to an absolute presbyterian apostasy. I cannot help conjecturing, that what we now witness, forebodes as deep, perhaps deeper results. The transcendental metaphysic of Jonathan Edwards, was safe in his own hands, because under the check of a sublime piety. But it strikes me, that the one Phœbus, will be followed by many Phaetons. Dissenters are endemically metaphysical; and when once the habit commences,—when once dogmas, long taken for granted, are explained, or justified, or limited, by reference to the nature of man, and the nature of things,—the practice, in itself excellent, and, in these times, peculiarly necessary, if soberly pursued, is, notwithstanding, in exactly such circumstances as I am supposing now to exist, a matter of most dubious prognostication. I am well aware, that they who, at this moment, are probably in greatest danger, least suspect themselves. They think they are so rooted and grounded in the doctrines of the Trinity, the atonement, the depravity and guilt of man, and the need of justifying and sanctifying grace, that it seems to them nothing could move them. And so long as they are content

to take these points for granted, all will be well; but let the line once be overstepped — let these tenets once be subjected to such reasoning, as Fuller uses against Sandemanians — and then, who will ensure, that exactly the same views will continue to be maintained? The Bible being so much more disseminated, implies little security; since we know the presbyterians became Arians, with the Bible in their hands. And we know, too, what use Arians can make of the bare text of the Bible. I do not mean to exaggerate dangers; and, if I saw existing securities, I should honestly state them.

I own I can conceive but one adequate security; and that scarcely yet exists. To study God's continued operation in his Church, as the truest commentary on what he has declared in his Word. Candid men now begin to acknowledge, that, through the fourteen centuries preceding the Reformation, the visible Church was not wholly "a desolate wilderness." — The pious and industrious Mr. Milner, in his "History of the Church of Christ," would have the true Church to be looked for, even in the times of the Beast, in distinct individual saints; who, in the midst of popery, were preserved by "effectual grace, in vital union with the Son of God," not less than in the separate associations: and Baxter had long before remarked, that "he who reads the lives of such men as Gerson, Thomas à Kempis, Philip Neri, Cardinal Borromæus, Francis de Sales, &c." will see, that it is not all church tyranny and corruption, though very heinous, that will prove that "Christ hath not a holy generation whom he will save."

But it is a curious fact, that, while in one compartment of Mr. Milner's Tableau, we see distinctly what he wishes us to look for, we do not equally succeed

in examining the other. The associated bodies of which he speaks, were, no doubt, signally conscientious ; and all of them, in succession, important links in the providential chain. But, they were clearly but day-labourers in the vineyard ; not builders of the temple. They each, in succession, rested from their labours, and will, no doubt, have a gracious reward ; but their works, in one sense, do not follow them ; not one instance appearing of a contribution to the treasury of Christian wisdom. They were the salt of the earth ; but not the light of the world. This is not blame : — I conceive it was their providential destiny.

On the other hand, the distinct individual saints were, in no instance, ephemeral. They were not only bright luminaries in their day, but, by virtue of their writings, they are “as the stars for ever and ever.” We have them, also, in unbroken succession ; no chasm occurring in the entire series. As Bishop Beveridge observes, “*Inter tot tantasque imperiorum confusiones, Ecclesiarum singularium tumultus, omniumque rerum humanarum perturbationes, sapientissima benignissimamque Dei opt. mx. providentiâ ita comparatum sit, ut ab ipsis apostolicis, usque ad hæc nostra tempora, nulla sit ætas, cujus ecclesiastica nobis monumenta non conservantur.*”<sup>1</sup> In this Christian “cloud of witnesses,” then, what to us is most interesting ? Clearly, what God did by them, and in them. But these two operations are interesting, in very different degrees —

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<sup>1</sup> Manifold and violent as have been the revolutions of empires, the disorders in particular churches, and the confusions of all human affairs, the infinitely wise and gracious providence of Almighty God hath, nevertheless, so ordered it, that all along, even from the apostolic times down to our own, there is no single period, of which ecclesiastical memorials have not been preserved for our use.

and discernible with very unequal distinctness. What God did *by* them, was adjusted to his own deep designs; and, whether implying his permission or his direction, to be understood with clearness only ἐν τῷ πληρώματι τῶν καιρῶν<sup>1</sup>, or, at most, gradually, as the providential rays become brighter, through growing convergence. But what God did *in* them, is of universal concernment: it is a study for every man, as far as he has access to it. For, what ample and sure elements of moral anatomy are here! For successive centuries, there is a silence about matters dogmatic, that nothing might divert from matters experimental; the controversies which did occur, being all about matters vital, and (as in the Pelagian dispute) serving to deepen, not disturb, what respected the mind and heart.

To this succession, then, of pure experimentalists (not theorists) in God's moral laboratory, I think we ought to go, if we would acquire ἡ ἐπίγνωσις ἀληθείας τῆς κατ' εὐσέβειαν.<sup>2</sup> Amid such a multitude of specimens, we cannot be at a loss to ascertain the genuineness, and even measure the degrees of piety; and we shall be equally enabled to trace the effects to their principles, and satisfy ourselves as to the connection between belief and practice. We shall see, by repeated comparisons, what were the ideas in the mind, which kept up the steadiest and deepest warmth in the heart, and the most absolute purity and charity in the conduct: and when we have furnished ourselves with such a set of specimens, as may contain a fair representation of those less divided, and less perturbed times, we may make an impartial comparison,

<sup>1</sup> In the fulness of times. Eph. i. 10.

<sup>2</sup> The acknowledging of the truth, which is after godliness. Tit. i. 1.



with an equally fair set of instances, from the last three centuries : and may infer, on the entire view, what points of belief are to be relied upon, as essential, or, at least, highly conducive to Christian excellence ; and what may be justly considered unessential, or, perhaps, cumbrous.

As in the body, so in the mind, perfect health can be the result only of perfect organization. Where, therefore, we see the most complete moral health, we cannot persuade ourselves that there was any want, either of mechanism, or pabulum. And yet we shall find, that certain dogmas, deemed of vital importance ever since the times of Luther and Calvin, were not only overlooked, but unthought of, in the times to which I refer. “ The doctrine of justification, in its explicit form,” says Mr. Milner, “ had been, for many ages, *lost* to the Christian world ;” that is, until restored by Luther. But, if there was as deep love to God and goodness, as heartfelt joy in the ways of holiness, and as conscious access through the incarnate Word, by the Divine Spirit, unto the Father, — if, in an eminent and most happy measure, not only “ the work of righteousness” was “ peace,” but “ the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever,” — on what ground can we conclude that the organization of principles, which sustained this state of things, was, in any substantial respect, defective ? But if it was not defective, does it not follow, that what has been added, must be superfluous ?

Again, when we find, throughout this whole retrospect, vital piety uniformly connected with, and growing out of, a belief of, and zeal for, the proper Godhead of the Son, and the inward energetic grace of the Spirit, — nay, when we find the deepest character of piety, — that which most effectually transforms the

earthly nature into the heavenly, — composed of these recognitions, as its elementary and essential ingredients ; living habitually upon these views as its resting-place, and rising upon them as its wings, when it soars highest above earthly things ; what can be concluded, but that these tenets belong to the essentials of our Christian faith, and that to depart from these, would be to forsake “ the fountain of living waters ? ” I touch this subject as briefly as possible, but it would require many words to express my sense of its importance. It is, most literally, what God commands, Jerem. vi. 16. It is to contemplate the Christian “ cloud of witnesses,” as St. Paul contemplated that, which was formed by the “ Holy men of old.” It is to seek elucidation of the divinely communicated elements of truth, in the divinely wrought experiments of overruling wisdom. It is, to follow Bacon’s profound advice, “ *consule providentiam Dei, cum verbo Dei.*”<sup>1</sup> For where can Providence be expected to work so clearly, unmixedly, effectually, as within the inmost circle of the Mystical Kingdom, and in matters essential to that end, for which “ the Word was made flesh ? ”

Without this comment, I am strongly persuaded, Holy Scripture cannot be satisfactorily understood. It may be so apprehended, as to form *νηπίοι ἐν Χριστῷ* (babes in Christ), but they will be *ἄπειροι λόγου δικαιοσύνης*.<sup>2</sup> They will not have a perfect view, even of what is taught respecting individual salvation ; still less will they see into that prophetic scheme, which, amid the most practical lessons, is frequently referred to ; and, in truth, forms a grand organization, to

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<sup>1</sup> Consult the providence of God, together with the word of God.

<sup>2</sup> Unskilful in the word of righteousness. Heb. v. 13.

which all the elementary parts, however vital, have a certain subordination. I have often thought, that, if the Scriptures of the New Testament had been designed for mere individual training, and for making such Christians as the religious world now generally consists of, it might have been comprised in five pages, — since evidently these would contain all, that even nineteen out of twenty of the most serious seem to know any thing of, or even to have attended to. But St. Paul has taught us to make a distinction, between *Μαρτύριον* (testimony), and *Μυστήριον* (mystery); the former of which, was the object of *Πίστις* (faith), the latter the matter of *Ἐπίγνωσις* (knowledge). *Πίστις* (faith), again, the effect of *Χάρις* (grace) and *Ἐπίγνωσις* (knowledge), the result of *Ἀλήθεια* (truth)—of both which, our Blessed Saviour is the vital source—being *πλήρης χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας*.<sup>1</sup> It is also remarkable, that St. Paul takes *Μυστήριον* (mystery) in two very different senses: 1. For what is effected, gradually, through sanctifying grace and illuminating truth, in the heart of the individual (Col. i. 27.); and, 2. For what God has resolved to accomplish in the world at large, in making the kingdoms of this world, the kingdoms of our Lord (Ephes. i. 9, 10.). It is natural to ask, why this two fold application of the same term? I conceive Jonathan Edwards gives (undesignedly) the true answer, when he tells us, that “the increase of Gospel light, and the carrying on the work of redemption, as it respects the elect Church in general, from the first erecting of the Church, to the end of the world, is very much after the same manner, as the carrying on of the same work, and the same light,

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<sup>1</sup> Full of grace and truth. S. John, i. 14.

in a particular soul, from the time of its conversion, till it is perfected and crowned in glory." Hist. of Redemp., Works, vol. v. p. 33. By the way, this tract gives the clearest outline of what I have ventured to call the Grand Organization of the Gospel-scheme, that has yet been given, as far as I know, to the world.

As *Χάρις* (grace), then, signifies the divine energy by which the inclination to good is excited; and *Μαρτύριον* (testimony) seems to mean the assemblage of divine facts, which *Χάρις* (grace) instrumentally uses for that purpose; while *Πίστις* (faith) is the receptive disposition, or the very habit of reception, which the Divine Energy inwardly produces: so *ἀλήθεια* (truth) may be regarded as that Divine *ἀπαυγασμα*, which gives direction, and, of course, effect, to inclination; *Μυστήριον*, the systematized plan, by means of which this manifestation of God and his ways, opens itself, in a manner the most effectual, on the individual mind, and, eventually, on the world at large; and *Ἐπίγνωσις* (knowledge), the solid, satisfactory acquaintance with the deep things of God, thus gradually attained to.

"Until we all come," says St. Paul, "*εἰς τὴν ἐνότητα τῆς πίστεως καὶ τῆς ἐπιγνώσεως τοῦ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ Θεοῦ.*"<sup>1</sup> Ephes. iv. 13. And yet more remarkably, our Saviour himself says, *ἵνα πάντες ἐν ᾧσι, &c., ἵνα ὁ κόσμος πιστεύσῃ*<sup>2</sup>; and then, *ἵνα ᾧσι τετελειωμένοι εἰς ἐν, καὶ ἵνα γινώσκῃ ὁ κόσμος,*<sup>3</sup> κ. τ. λ.<sup>4</sup>

The mysterious connection, as well as analogy, between the efficacy of that Divine *Ἀλήθεια*, which

<sup>1</sup> Unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God.

<sup>2</sup> That they all may be one, that the world may believe.

<sup>3</sup> That they may be perfected into one, that the world may know, &c.

<sup>4</sup> S. John, xvii. 21. 23.

is so often referred to, on the individual and on the world, is farther evinced by this, — that St. Paul communicates God's design respecting the world, to those only, who had made some proficiency in the *Μυστήριον* (mystery), as it related to themselves. Thus, he withholds nothing from the Ephesians; while, to the Colossians, he speaks of nothing, but what is inward and personal; and he fairly tells the Corinthians, that he could not impart to them that *Σοφία* (wisdom), which he spake among the perfect, because they were *νηπιοί* (babes), and could not bear it.

There being, then, in all this, so much undeniable depth, complexity, and prospectiveness, how is it possible we should at all apprehend its import, except by going to what has been since done, for explanation of what was so significantly, yet so obscurely, uttered? How should communications of reference be understood, but by strictly comparing them, as far as we have opportunity, with the things referred to; above all, when so great stress is laid upon *Επίγνωσις* (knowledge), and when it is in our power to correct, enlarge, illustrate, and confirm our own individual experience<sup>1</sup>, by the continued experience of many successive centuries; to try our lights by their concurrent lights, our feelings, by their concordant feelings, and our rules of religious life, by at least the consistent spirit of theirs; if, I say, we omit all this, and content ourselves with looking at what the Scripture alone presents to us, as if across a vacant waste of at least fourteen hundred intervening years, how can we be sure that we

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<sup>1</sup> *Δοκιμή*. Knowledge from trial, equivalent, at least nearly, to *Εμπειρία*. This latter, rather the result of the other.

possess principles, to ensure our own personal steadfastness, if varying winds of doctrine should arise? And still less can we hope to have any clear apprehension of the methods and degrees, by which the kingdom of our Lord is to advance in the world.

I fear I have got into a subject, which the bounds I must at present set to myself will leave scarcely intelligible. I can now only attempt to lighten my darkness, by one more ray of the infallible Word. St. Paul (Ephes. ii. 20. &c.) illustrates the advancing Church, by a building, which proceeds onward to its destined height, by successive layers of masonry, or other apt matter; each successive layer being superinduced, on those which were placed already, (See Edwards's Hist. of Redemp. Introd. Works, vol. v. p. 18., and also, Improv. of the whole, sec. vii. p. 299.). Of the mystical fabric thus elucidated, the apostle says, *πᾶσα ἡ οἰκοδομὴ συναρμολογουμένη αὕξει.*<sup>1</sup> That is, clearly, in order to the completion of the design, there must be a perfect harmony of all the parts with each other; symmetry must be preserved, between each layer, and the whole; and therefore, each fresh layer must accord not only with the foundation, which supports all, but with all that has been already laid. If this care be not taken, the building cannot go on, according to the prescribed plan; it would not be *συναρμολογουμένη*. At least, the part thus attempted to be built in, will not be, in the perfect sense, *συνοικοδομηθεῖς* (built together).

I think I do not strain this passage of Scripture, in deducing from it, support for that reference of the faith and piety of the ancient Church, which I have

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<sup>1</sup> All the building fitly framed together groweth. Eph. ii. 21.

been insisting on. If the whole building be συναρμολογουμένη, then we, who form the later layers, must try ourselves by all that have been laid before us, as the mason drops his plumb-line along the entire wall. And is not this one great advantage? For the fuller the standard, the more complete the guidance, and the more satisfactory the conclusion.

And as this method is the safest, for ascertaining our own individual rectitude, so it would seem indispensable, in calculating the progress of the great scheme. For how can we apprehend the principles on which the plan proceeds, but by knowing, with comprehensiveness as well as distinctness, the manner in which it has hitherto been conducted? or how even can we conceive aright the object, which Divine wisdom aims at, except by observing closely, what has been the line of movement from the beginning? I am particularly led to make this observation, by the strange views which some present to us, of the fulfilment of prophecy: as if the fall of the Pope, or of the Roman Catholic religion, or of Mahometanism, &c. &c. were all that the world needed, in order to the commencement, at least, of the millennium; and that then, some miraculous influence were to effect the rest. The deep care, which, on such a retrospect as I am recommending, would appear to have been taken, to maintain and cherish an unvitiated, unabating spirit of vital holiness, in mind and heart, and the noiseless and unostentatious energies, through which this heavenly principle has been kept up and advanced, in spite of deep and surrounding darkness and countless errors; a due consideration of these, I say, would naturally suggest the idea of a more profound, more philosophical, and therefore, much more gradual process

of Divine Wisdom, in meliorating mankind, than seems at present to be thought of. It would be seen, that extension is not likely to be pursued, in this process, at the expense of depth ; and that rooted and grounded principles are preferred, to all that intellectual acuteness can attain in doctrine, or scrupulous exactness accomplish in worship. That every thing will at length be rectified, "according to the pattern in the Mount," who can question? But it will be apparent, on inspection, that, from first to last, the paramount object has been, to establish the love of God above all things, in the inmost recesses of the heart ; so as to make it the master affection, to which every movement of the inner and outward man should be subservient ; to make it, in a word, not a habit merely, but a nature.

From such a view of the past, much might be learned respecting the present. Distrust of bustle, dislike of eager speculation, suspicion of rapid improvements, jealousy of sudden changes, would be apt to grow up in the mind. But indolence, or apathy, would not therefore succeed. The eye thus enlightened, judging by the past, would recognise God's work going on, in many an unconscious agency ; would behold Providence, as ever employing means, in man's view the most unlikely ; and would be comforted by prospects of greatest good, where less instructed minds foresaw nothing but evil. But the habit would not be alone contemplative ; there would be heartfelt zeal to work, where there was opportunity ; to give every susceptible thing, as it presented itself, its right direction ; and to instil into every mind and heart, where an opening was perceived, the essential, immutable principles



which have been proved to work, with like efficacy, in all ages of the Christian Church.

I have barely room to add, what I had in view to mention from the first. You thought, and I do not wonder that you should think, my censure of mysticism, as reducible to “a bare abstract belief, in God’s infinite essence,” a little too severe. It is remarkable, that one of the ablest and most truly pious combatants of the system, brings the same charge. Nicole (who wrote his excellent treatise *Sur la Prière*, in great measure, against the mystical notion) speaks thus, in one of his letters : — “Le moyen ordinaire par lequel Dieu agit sur la volonté de l’homme, c’est d’éclairer la volonté ; le moyen ordinaire par lequel il excite l’amour, c’est de proposer les motifs d’amour ; comme, de faire penser aux attributs qui nous rendent Dieu aimable ; à sa sagesse, à sa justice, à sa miséricorde, à sa bonté, à sa puissance, à ses bienfaits, à sa croix, et à tous les autres motifs qui sont employés, dans l’Ecriture, et dans les livres des saints. Donc, renoncer à tout cela, pour ne s’occuper que d’une idée confuse de l’immensité de Dieu, qui de soi-même est celle de toutes, qui nous rend Dieu moins aimable, c’est tenter Dieu ; c’est vouloir qu’il nous nourrisse de pierre, de bois, ou d’air, au lieu de se nourrir de pain.

“Le Quiétisme est une adresse du diable, qui, désirant abolir tous les mystères et tous les attributs de Dieu, par lesquels il a opéré le salut des hommes, et n’y pouvant réussir, a trouvé le secret de les anéantir, au moins dans leur mémoire, en faisant prendre à de faux spirituels une méthode, qui consiste à n’y point penser. C’est une plaisante vision, que l’acte de foi ne s’exerce qu’envers certains attributs,

dont on n'a qu'une idée confuse, comme l'immensité de Dieu." <sup>1</sup>

I assure you I had not attended to this passage (which I copy from *La Vie de M. Nicole*, p. 400.) when I made my observations; but if I do not mistake, my idea is precisely the same. Nicole is a treasure. His works (in 25 volumes, of which the *Life* is the 14th) deserve a place in every serious Christian's study.

Believe me, my dear Sir,

Very sincerely and faithfully yours,

ALEXANDER KNOX.

March 16.

<sup>1</sup> The ordinary means, by which God acts upon the will of man, is the enlightening that will; the ordinary means, by which He excites love, is the setting before us motives to love; as by making us think of those attributes, which render God an object of our love. His wisdom, justice, and mercy, His goodness, power, and beneficence; His cross, and all the other motives which are employed in Holy Scripture, and in the writings of the saints. To renounce the whole of this, in order to be exclusively possessed with a vague notion of the Immensity of God, which, of itself, is, of all His attributes, the one which renders God least an object of our love, — is to tempt God; it is to wish that He would feed us with stone, with wood, or with air, instead of bread. Quietism is a device of the Devil, who, wishing to do away with all the mysteries, and all the attributes of God, by which he has effected the salvation of men, and not being able to succeed, has discovered this secret of annihilating them, at least in their memory, by making persons, who are falsely called spiritual, adopt a system, which consists in not thinking of them at all. How strange a fancy is an act of faith, which is exercised only on certain attributes, of which we have no more than a vague notion; as is the case with the Immensity of God!

ON THE PARABLES CONTAINED IN THE THIRTEENTH  
CHAPTER OF ST. MATTHEW.

**ROBERT BOYLE** excellently observes, “that the Bible loses much, by not being considered as a system. For though,” says he, “many other books are comparable to cloth, in which, by a small pattern, we may safely judge of the whole piece; yet the Bible is like a fair suit of arras, of which, though a shred may assure you of the fineness of the colours, and richness of the stuff, yet the hangings never appear to their true advantage, but when they are displayed to their full dimensions, and seen together.”

With respect to the parables, in particular, this pious and judicious author gives his opinion, that some, if not most, do (like those oysters, that, besides the meat, afford us certain pearls) “not only include excellent moralities, but comprise important prophecies.” He adduces, as instances, the parable of the grain of mustard seed, and that of the treacherous husbandmen; and he adds, that he does “not despair to see unheeded prophecies disclosed in others of them.” He several times expresses his strong persuasion, that posterity were yet to discover in Holy Scripture, numberless new excellencies, and important verities, especially of the prophetic kind; and, in one place, he makes this interesting remark: “that as mineralists observe, that rich mines are wont to lie hid in those grounds, whose surface bears no fruit trees (too much maligned by the arsenical and resembling fumes), nor is well stored with useful

plants or verdure (as if God would endear those ill-favoured lands, by giving them great portions), so divers passages of Holy Writ, which appear barren and unpromising to our first survey, and hold not obviously forth instructions or promises, being by a sedulous artist searched into, (and the original word *ἐρευνᾶν*, used in that text of Search the Scriptures, doth properly signify the searching for hid treasure,) afford, out of their penetrated bowels, rich and precious mysteries of divinity."

I have transcribed these passages, from a very valuable work, of an invaluable man (Considerations touching the Style of the Holy Scriptures, by the Hon. Robert Boyle), in order to give countenance to some ideas which have occurred to me, respecting the seven parables in the thirteenth chapter of St. Matthew, the novelty of which may require all the support, that such a sanction can give them. It is, then, my persuation, that the parables in this chapter are not to be considered disjointedly, but to be taken together as a connected series, indicating, progressively, the several stages of advancement, through which the mystical kingdom of Christ upon earth, was to proceed, from its commencement to its consummation. It is thus supposed, that the different movements of the divine scheme, represented by the different parables, commence successively, each in its season; but it is not supposed, that a former movement ceases, when the next commences. It is, on the contrary, a matter of obvious certainty, that the first parable, for instance, and indeed the second, and no less evidently the third, though succeeding each other in point of commencement, can have no other termination, than the grand dénouement of the mystical drama.

It will be understood, then, that each parable has a period, peculiarly its own ; in which the state of things so signified, predominates ; but that, when another state of things commences, the former does not cease. It only becomes less prominent ; operative as really as ever, but in a way subsidiary to that which now takes the lead. It will follow, that each succeeding stage, implies a virtual combination of all that has gone before ; and, of course, the grand concluding scene will contain, the sublimated spirit, and extracted essence of the whole. That I may not be liable to the charge of asserting gratuitously, I turn to the sacred page. I there find the series commencing, with that exercise of divine mercy and goodness, which, in the nature of things, must be introductory to every other. In those words, "Behold, a sower went forth to sow," we feel, at once, that we have described to us, the first opening of the Gospel. This was self-evidently the first step, in the evangelic dispensation ; and the entire parable gives us the foundation, on which all the sequel of efficacious mercy to man must depend. Therefore, most fitly, says our Lord, in St. Mark's Gospel, to his disciples, "Know ye not this parable ? and how, then, shall ye know all parables ?"

I would gladly dwell on this commencing parable, which to my mind appears a matter of never-ending astonishment ; the delineation is so exact, the philosophy so profound, the statement so copious, and yet without forcing in any degree, or deserting for a moment, one of the simplest and most common of natural operations. I am obliged, even by this parable, to believe, that the laws of physical nature were originally constructed, on the principle of future

increase. The last and highest rank, "fathers," are described by the same wise and pious writer, as "those that are so strong, as to attain extraordinary degrees of grace, who are, therefore, comparatively called perfect;" most probably, these also will be, hereafter, more numerous; there can be no doubt, at all events, that such were the characters in our Lord's view, when he predicted, that there would be an hundredfold increase, as well as a sixtyfold, and a thirty-fold.

The ground-work of the mystical kingdom of Christ being thus laid, its inmost operations thus clearly stated, and thus exquisitely illustrated,—our Lord proceeds, in a second parable, to describe that state of things, which was speedily to ensue, after the first implanting of Christianity, by the instrumentality of the apostles; and which was to give the Church a mixed character, to be ever after borne by it, until the period of consummation. The substance of the parable is, that, after the good seed had been sown in the field of this world, an enemy, coming by night, sowed tares also: which tares, however, when once sown, were not suffered to be extirpated; but directed, by the great Disposer to be left as they were, mingled with the wheat; until the fulness of time should arrive, for planting the effectual and final remedy.

It requires no reasoning to prove, that the matter of fact, which is indicated in this parable, is of later commencement, than that indicated in the foregoing parable. It may be observed, that this second parable begins with a brief statement, of what the first parable had so fully exhibited. "The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man, which sowed good seed in his field." It presupposes, therefore, the great transaction of the former parable; and, conse-

quently, its own leading matter is, in point of time, posterior. Thus far, then, we have express evidence of an intended chronological succession.

Commentators have little difference, respecting the meaning of the parable of the tares. Our Lord has left no room for it: — “The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the tares are the children of the ‘wicked one.’” Therefore, self-evidently, this parable represents that mixed state of the visible Church, which took place gradually, from at least the second century; and, (as might be expected from the sovereign decree, “Let both grow together until the harvest,”) is not less apparent, at the present day.

The third parable, places before us a still later event; the growth of the visible Church into magnitude and power. Its small beginnings are fitly represented, by one of the least of seeds; its subsequent condition, on the contrary, is illustrated by the same figure, which was used to express the greatness of Nebuchadnezzar’s empire, in that prophetic dream, which warned him of his approaching humiliation. “I saw a tree,” says he: “it grew, and was strong; the leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much; the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the birds of the air dwelt in the boughs thereof.”

In like manner, the kingdom of the Messiah “becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come, and lodge in the branches thereof:” that is to say, it becomes so conspicuous, as to draw the eye of every creature towards it; and so strong, that, instead of appearing to need support for itself, it is resorted to, and made use of, as affording a ready and beneficial shelter; a situation, not where inconvenience is to

be suffered, as was the case at first, but where much convenience may be found. This description of the visible kingdom of Christ, self-evidently, did not apply, before the time of Constantine the Great. We may therefore suppose this new step in the series, beginning at that period, and advancing onward, until completed by the uncompromising zeal of Theodosius; on whom the epithet of Great, has also, and, perhaps, with still greater reason, been bestowed. Constantine was as Moses, who brought the Israel of God out of oppressive bondage: Theodosius was as David, who confirmed its quiet, increased its magnitude, and invested it with all suitable circumstances of outward dignity and beauty.

I will mention a farther thought, without meaning to contend for its truth; though, to my mind, it appears to have much probability. The emblem of a tree would seem to represent the Church, not merely as visible, but as hierarchical. In this latter respect, imagination could have furnished no figure more appropriate. The visible hierarchical Church, is, indeed, as a tree dividing, first into two trunks, Eastern and Western; then into several stems, representative of national churches; then into yet smaller stems, corresponding to ecclesiastical provinces; then into smaller still, answering to dioceses; and, finally, into the smallest of all, parochial churches. It is to be observed, that such, exactly, was the form of the visible Church, at the period which has been supposed to belong, eminently, to this parable. And as it is sure that the Church could not have grown into such a form, without providential direction; so the reality of such an event, to be manifested in due time, and to remain unaltered for at least twelve successive centuries, could not be unknown to the Omniscent



Speaker. I will not press the probable inference; but leave it to be reflected on, with attention and candour.

While the visible Church has so signally advanced, it is natural to ask, what has become of the invisible Church? that company of true believers, which no human observer could ever enumerate, but which is ever present to the eye of God; as St. Paul has said, "The Lord knoweth them that are His?" At the first, the invisible Church was, perhaps, nearly commensurate with the visible. But we have seen another state of things take place, under the period of the second parable; and we cannot suppose, that Christian virtue could become more apparent, when whole nations, and those generally barbarians, were embracing the Christian profession. The increase of merely nominal Christians, therefore, represented by the second parable, would advance naturally and inevitably under the third, until at length vital Christianity would seem to have disappeared from amongst men. The fourth parable will, in this view, come in, most opportunely, to relieve our anxiety for the soul of Christianity, amid the prosperous circumstances which, till now, seem to attach only to its body.

"The kingdom of heaven," says our Saviour, "is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened." A more simple illustration, one would think, could not be chosen; and yet, never were human words, in so small a compass, more pregnant with information.

A state of things is evidently marked, in which vital Christianity has, in great measure, disappeared from view: this circumstance alone carries us to a

late period ; at least, later than all that are yet referred to. The profession is extended to a degree, that would have once been incredible. But it is, to all appearance, a mass unactuated by the true spirit. Is, then, the true spirit extinct? does it cease to expand itself? will it never again be manifested? This parable answers all. It is still there, but it is hidden. It retains its original energy without abatement; but it works inwardly; imperceptibly,—but unremittingly, profoundly, effectually. Instead of being destroyed, by the lifeless heap in which it is hidden, it will, in the end, assimilate the whole to itself. In the fulness of the times, the whole “shall be leavened.” “The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.”

We ourselves are, in some measure, witnesses of the accuracy of these prophetic delineations. The various effects of divine truth on individuals; the mixed state of the visible Church; its external magnitude, and organic arrangement; the comparative disappearance, and yet incontestible existence, of genuine Christianity; these objects of thought and observation, we have it ever in our power to examine and contemplate; and so examining and contemplating, we shall certainly never cease to admire and adore the wisdom, which first planned the scheme, and then made the astonishing communication. If, however, our minds are suitably engaged, we shall wish to be still farther informed, by what particular methods the leaven extends itself, and through what kind of operation, the expected result shall at length be accomplished.

The two following parables, of the treasure, and the pearl, seem designed to satisfy us on these very points. There are only two ways of attaining true

religion : the one, by conversion, after a state of sin, or, at least, of thoughtlessness ; the other, by the blessing of Heaven, upon a wise and pious education. The blessing acquired is the same, substantially, in both cases ; the temper necessary to its acquirement, is identical in both ; but other circumstances are remarkably, and most instructively diversified.

The former parable, that of the treasure, represents the person, as finding what he was not looking for. He stumbles on it unexpectedly : but recognizing its worth, not merely his judgment and affections, but his passions, come immediately into operation. " He hideth it," — an expression of fear ; and " for joy thereof he goeth, and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field." We have a picture of his emotions, in the simple, but most expressive terms, that are used to describe them.

Thus it is generally, with the converted prodigal. He is, for the most part, reclaimed from profligacy, or roused from insensibility, by some unlooked-for occurrence ; some awakening providence ; some earnest address of a preacher ; some opportune conversation of a friend or acquaintance. He becomes impressed with an object, which is to him as new and as strange as a hoard of gold, which had been concealed in the earth, could be to the finder of it : and, resolved to possess what he has discovered, there is no sacrifice, of what he has hitherto valued, which he is not ready to submit to. He sees that religion alone, the vital religion of the heart, can confer either present peace, or everlasting felicity ; and earth, with all that earth can bestow, appears less than nothing, in comparison of the treasure, with which he has unexpectedly become acquainted. " For joy thereof, he goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field."

“Buyeth that field.” Is there any particular meaning in the circumstance,—the buying the field, in order to enjoy the treasure? It would seem to point out, what experience has often verified, that converts to serious religion, are under a kind of necessity of receiving that blessing, in the special manner in which it is offered to them. Being captivated by religion, instead of having pursued after it, they have little, if any power of discriminating, between what is substantial, and what is circumstantial. They must take the blessing with its accidental adjuncts, or hazard disappointment. Do they, therefore, find it among any particular people? They are led by a sort of instinctive feeling, a conscious necessity, for every aid, especially for what has already been effectual to their illumination, to attach themselves to that people : and where such an attachment, in this particular case, is not formed, the impression is too often transient. Acted upon, rather than acting for themselves, they must keep themselves within the sphere of influences already found to be powerful, in order to preserve the warmth, which has begun to glow in their hearts. It is, therefore, a most suitable feature in the representation, that the field is purchased by him, who wishes to secure that which he has found in it, and which he could have no expectation of finding elsewhere.

The following parable, however, marks, as was already observed, a very different path to the same end. It places a merchant-man before us, who traffics in pearls, and who exerts both skill and industry to possess himself of the best. It must be felt, in the very first instance, that scarcely could a figure have been found, more elegant or more simple. A pearl of the finer kind, combines a beauty, a richness, and

a purity, hardly to be matched in any other production of nature. To choose a pearl of matchless value, therefore, as the emblem of Evangelic religion, was to make this heavenly object as engaging to our mental taste, and love of refined pleasure, as it is, in its own acknowledged nature, impressive on our understanding and our conscience. He, whom this pursuit occupies, is a merchant-man ; that is, one trained, as well as devoted to business. The search is therefore determinate, discriminative, unremitting. It is the main business of life. This case, then, corresponds to such Christians only, as, from youth, have been trained up, in the way in which they should go. In these alone, can be the settled habits, the effectual self-direction, the convergement to one point of all the powers and tendencies of the soul, which are indicated by the illustration. It is intimated, however, that, even here, there is a discovery, at a particular time, which fixes choice, and induces a more decided action. The merchant-man is seeking goodly pearls ; that is, the mind and heart are devoted to the pursuing of what is true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report ; and, no doubt, such is the result which may be hoped for, from the blessing of God upon wise and well-directed education. But then, excellent as these objects are, they are not the one thing needful. They are but goodly pearls. Not the one pearl of great price. That is, initiatory habits of the most promising kind are formed, but the efficacious principle of inward and spiritual life, has not yet come into clear and conscious operation. In such a pursuit, and on the supposition of necessary knowledge, the interior vitality will not long remain unknown ; and when distinctly understood, it will be so appreciated, by the rightly disposed mind, as to

correspond most fully to this figurative representation. It is to be observed, that the signs of emotion, which were mentioned in the case of the treasure, are not intimated here. The decision of conduct is, however, exactly the same; the merchant-man, having "found one pearl of great price, sells all, and buys it." Clearly discovering the nature and excellency of vital Christianity, he chooses it cordially, unconditionally, and at whatever cost, for his portion, and the lot of his inheritance.

But be it observed, that the pearl is purchased alone. In the former parable, the treasure could not be had without the field. In this parable, the blessing is obtained simply, without accompaniment. Does not this imply, that he who devotes himself, from early life, to the wise and steady pursuit of the one thing needful, not only accomplishes his object, but accomplishes it in the most effectual, and most excellent way. His views of religion are obscured by no uncomfortable prejudices; his exercise of religion is not debased by any slavish observances. His choice of happiness has been, not less the deliberate act of his judgment, than the movement of his heart. He understands the full value of his purchase; and there is not one circumstance to abate his satisfaction, or mingle the shadow of sadness, with his "sober certainty of waking bliss."

But has such a character been, hitherto, often realized? In an inferior degree it may: but, it should seem, very rarely in its fulness: possibly in no instance, to that perfect height, of which the parable, taken in its full extent, gives the idea. It is to be observed, that this is the sixth of the seven parables; supposing, therefore, a continued succession in the respective commencements, this parable must cor-

respond to a late period. There are obvious facts, which strengthen this conclusion. One is, that, hitherto, the invisible Church has been chiefly kept up by conversions. Epidemic movements of piety have been now and then taking place, by which, in every instance, numbers have been attracted; and, whatever may have been the mixtures of human weakness, a sense of religion has been diffused, and undeniable good has been effected. Of this nature, during the last two hundred years, were Puritanism in England, Pietism in Germany, and Methodism in our own times. The Church of Rome, during the same time, was not without a similar movement, namely, Jansenism; the practical effects of which were often as brilliant, as its doctrines (in several respects according with the highest Calvinism) were gloomy and repulsive.

Thus, it may be inferred, that such an exercise of Divine mercy, as is indicated by the discovered treasure, has as yet been the prevalent dispensation. But some more effectual method is to be looked for, both in order to the fulfilment of prophecy, and the full exemplification of Christian excellence. It is declared, that, in the latter times, "they shall no more teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for that they shall all know God, from the least to the greatest." This state of things cannot grow out of conversions, however multiplied; for conversions of adults can generally be effected, only through the teaching of neighbours and brethren. Besides, when all know God, from the least to the greatest, the business of conversion will be superseded, for want of suitable subjects; adult sinners, being the subjects of adult conversion. It follows then, in reason, that the

actual arrangement, in the mystical kingdom of Christ, will exhibit, in this latter instance, a succession as clearly marked, as in any of the former instances; and that, in the fulness of the times, the finders of the treasure in the field, will give way to a race of merchant-men; that is, of Timothies, inheritors of hereditary faith; and from children growing up in that knowledge, which "maketh wise unto salvation."

The excellency of such a system, when brought, through Almighty wisdom, into complete operation, may be concluded, from the place held, by exactly such characters, in sacred history; the testimony given to them, and the services, in various instances, performed by them. It is remarkable, that all the eminent instruments, made use of in the Old Testament, were distinguished for early piety. To this rule, I do not recollect that there is a single exception. In the New Testament, the great archetype of excellence himself, as man, belongs, self-evidently, to the class of merchant-men; and, as it was fit that, in all things, he should have the pre-eminence, at twelve years old he appears in the Temple, the head and patron, as it were, of well-trained pious children. Of the Apostles, we know nothing, before their appearance in the Gospel; but we might conjecture, from the peculiar manner of St. John, that his mind had never moved in the track of common men; that it had ever been habituated to soar above earthly things, and that, therefore, it received the mysteries of Heaven, when presented to it, in their purest spirituality, and sublimest elevation.

St. Paul himself, though distinguished as a convert, and therefore standing at the head of all who have ever after found the hidden treasure, is not



wholly of this class. He singularly unites the two characters ; and has thus been fitted, for being, in the most eminent degree, a good steward of the manifold grace of God. Changed from prejudices, as signally as ever any after convert was changed from profligacy, he could sympathize in every painful, and every joyous emotion, that the most revolutionary conversion could give rise to. At the same time, having, as he himself tells us, served God from his forefathers with a pure conscience, he possessed habits of mind, intellectually and morally, as well as supernaturally congenial, to every high and noble purpose of his heavenly calling. There is, therefore, no height, which his winged spirit has not looked down upon ; no depth, which his knowledge does not explore ; no remote possibility, which his divine philosophy does not embrace. He is, in a word, as much the Apostle of merchant-men, as of those who find the treasure ; and in the ripest season of the Christian Church, whatever fruit shall be produced, the matchless writings of St. Paul will be found to contain, not only its seeds and elements, but the very model and specimen of its highest maturity.

On St. Paul's judgment, then, as the most capable estimator of both descriptions of Christians, we may rely, for the superiority of the class represented by the sixth parable ; and, according to the series, destined to prevail in the sixth period. The Apostle gives this judgment, in his preference of Timothy, to all others who had laboured with him ;—"I have none like-minded," says he ; "for all men seek their own things, and not the things of Jesus Christ." And on what, in St. Paul's view, had this superiority of character been founded ? He himself tells us, that it was on the excellent education, which Timothy

had received, from his grandmother Lois, and his mother Eunice. By them, he had been early instructed in revealed truth ; and having received it with pure affection, his whole mind and heart became naturalized to goodness. Therefore, St. Paul could say of him, that, " as a son with a father, he had served with him in the Gospel ;" and that, while apostasies were multiplied, he relied on Timothy for perseverance and consistency.

It cannot, then, be doubted, that an age of Timothies, would be a golden age of the Church. And such an age, I conceive, we are taught to expect, by the united pointing of the four latter parables. That of the grain of mustard seed, by indicating such completeness of growth, affords ground for inferring, that the prosperity within, will, sooner or later, correspond to the prosperity without ; it being unlikely, that Divine Wisdom would, as it were, take pains to construct an exquisite body, if that body were not, at one time or other, to be animated by a suitable soul. What the third parable thus intimates, the fourth expressly asserts : the mingled mass of the visible Church, which was wheat and tares in the second parable, is, in this parable, leaven and meal ; and, however unpromising the appearance, the result is certain, .. " the leaven was hidden, till the whole was leavened."

But to this maturity of things, the next parable will not be found correspondent ; when the whole mass shall be leavened, the kingdom of Heaven will self-evidently be no longer as hidden treasure ; no longer a blessing to be found, as if by accident. This fifth parable, therefore, must of necessity be understood of an earlier age ; namely, of that less perfect state of the Church, in which the inward principle works, more steadily than ostensibly, and rather mani-

feels itself in favoured individuals, than shows any marked tendency to effectual diffusion. The unsuitableness, then, of this parable, to those happier circumstances already predicted, obliges us to examine the immediately following representation of the same thing, in order to see, if it will quadrate with that advanced improvement, which must necessarily be signified, by the leavening of the whole; and, if I mistake not, the more we weigh the sixth parable, the more we shall be convinced, that, in proportion as the true light diffuses itself, the kingdom of Heaven must be more and more like unto "a merchant-man:" in other words, must contain an increasing proportion of well-instructed seekers, and a decreasing proportion of seemingly fortuitous finders; till, at length, from full-grown light, and ripened influence, the former character shall wholly supersede the latter.

On the last parable of all, that of the "Net," I need not dwell. Like the "seventh seal," and the "seventh trumpet," in the Apocalypse, it apparently does little more than mark the final close. What is most remarkable in this seventh parable, is, that it repeats the decree of Heaven, against a separation of real, from nominal Christians; a practice, however, still attempted, and therefore proving the necessity for this reduplicated prohibition.

REMARKS ON MRS. BARBAULD'S ESSAY ON  
DEVOTIONAL TASTE.

THE thoughts in the preceding Essay are, in some instances, so truly original, and in almost every point so interesting and useful, that the present Editor cannot refrain from attempting to expand a few of those ideas, which, from their uncommon depth, might be but imperfectly apprehended by the generality of readers.

Many sober persons may be startled, at religion being, in any view of it, considered as a "taste, an affair of sentiment and feeling;" but such persons will do well to recollect, that religion cannot be liked or loved by us, ~~without~~ coming under this denomination.

Doubtless, religion, when at all thought of, is too generally attended to, not for its own sake, but because it is accounted necessary, in order to escaping certain future evils, and attaining certain future benefits. In this view, most certainly, it has nothing to do with taste: it is, on the contrary, a mere business of mercenary calculation; and may be pursued with as little of relish of heart, as any other lucrative, but self-denying occupation. To this class, therefore, the representing religion as a matter of taste, must necessarily appear a new, and, perhaps, a wholly unintelligible doctrine. Possibly, they may even dislike the idea; and deem it akin to that enthusiasm, which they are used to regard, as the greatest possible abuse of Christian piety.

And yet, if the essence of true religion be the supreme love of God, how can this exist, without implying relish or taste? What we love, we think of with pleasure; we turn our minds towards it, not for the sake of something else, which we look for from it, but for its own sake; because we see in itself, something which is delightful to us, which we are satisfied with, and which our hearts rest in as a kind of home. This is essential to love; if this be wanting, it is not love, but prudence, or selfishness. We regard the thing, whatever it be, only so far as it serves our purpose, and no farther. When, therefore, the Jewish lawgiver, and the Eternal Word of the Father, agree in declaring, that "to love the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and mind," is the first and great commandment, they equally assure us, that, until our religion becomes "a taste, an affair of sentiment and feeling," it is, most assuredly, no religion at all.

We too generally consider our tastes, as subordinate, rather than leading parts of our nature; and as having to do, not with the graver, but with the lighter parts of our life: and it is admitted, that we have little occasion for the faculty which bears this name, in the counting-house, or the Exchange; in managing a law-suit, or in canvassing for a borough: yet, even in these pursuits, is not taste, in some shape or other, at the end of the vista? Is it not the sense of pleasure, (which, in one or other form, is ultimately to be gratified,) that operates as a weight, or main-spring, to the whole machine? And is it not infinitely more by the kind of pleasure which is ultimately aimed at,—that is, is it not infinitely more, by our ruling taste, than by the business we may be engaged in, or even the manner in which that business is pursued, that

the radical character of the individual, is ascertained and appreciated?

The truth is, that our taste, considered in the most extended sense of the term, is, eminently and essentially, our moral faculty. As our likings are, so are we ourselves. We may know what is right, without carrying it either into feeling or practice. We may do what is right hypocritically, so as to become worse, instead of better, by doing so ; but if we love what is right, if we have an inward taste for goodness,—preferring it, from a heartfelt pleasure which it gives us, independently of all views of interest, or all merely mercenary hopes and fears,—then, and then only, are we virtuous persons, entitled to estimation here, and sure of bliss hereafter.

Do we, then, wish to ascertain, our own real moral character? We must not ask, merely, what are the subjects which engage our thoughts, nor what the business which occupies our time? We may employ our intellect on the very best subjects, without cordially loving them ; we may be busied in the most useful occupations, in order to entitle ourselves to take pleasure, afterwards, in something else. To this last point, then, must we come. What is it that we look forward to, with the strongest bent of desire? What is our predominant taste? Let this question be honestly answered, and we gain a true knowledge of ourselves. In matters of business, we may be diligent and correct, from mere self-interest. Nay, in matters of religious duty, we may be punctual, and even rigid, in order to avoid remorse here, or purchase a mercenary heaven hereafter. But, in both instances, it is necessity, not choice, which shows itself. When business is over, and when stated duties are performed, then come choice and freedom ;

and then only do we manifest our hearts. If we drop our regularity, with our Ledger, we have evidently no inward love of correctness; and if we are accustomed to lay aside our pious thoughts, with our Prayer-Book, we clearly like something, better than our religion.

In order, therefore, to prove ourselves religious, it is not enough that we appear to practise it; we must also be satisfied that we have a taste for it, nay, that it is our habitual, predominant taste: for less than this cannot be implied, in that supreme love of God, which the Scripture considers as essential to true religion. Religion is obviously the highest moral habit, of which our nature is capable: and it has already been seen, that our taste, or our liking, is most directly our moral faculty; consequently, nothing can be clearer, than that the highest exercise of this faculty, must enter essentially into that, which constitutes our highest moral habit; that is, we must relish religion above all things, in order to being religious at all.

It is to be observed, that Mrs. Barbauld is not the only modern writer of genius, who accounts religion a sentiment, or a business of taste. Mackenzie, in his beautiful story of La Roche, has so impressively enlarged upon this very idea, that it would be injustice to the subject not to transcribe it. "La Roche's religion," says he, "was that of sentiment, not of theory. When he spoke on the subject, it was from the fulness of a heart impressed with its force, and wishing to spread the pleasure he enjoyed in it. The ideas of his God were so congenial to his mind, that every emotion of it naturally awaked them. 'You regret, my friend,' said he to the infidel philosopher, 'when my daughter and I talk of the

exquisite pleasure derived from music, —you regret your want of musical powers, and musical feelings ; it is a department of soul, you say, which nature has almost denied you ; which, from the effects you see it have on others, you are sure must be highly delightful. Why should not the same thing be said of religion ? Trust me, I feel it in the same way, an energy, an inspiration, which I would not lose for all the blessings of sense, or all the enjoyments of the world.' " — The intelligent reader will judge, whether Mrs. Barbauld's idea, could have been either more distinctly adopted, or more admirably expanded.

I cannot, however, refrain from adding, the following remarks, of the eloquent and rational Saurin ; as I conceive no passage of equal length could do fuller justice to the subject : —

" Reasons," says he, " for resisting the flesh, for rising superior to sense and matter, too commonly vanish, at the presence of those objects, which act upon our passions. How greatly, then, is that man to be pitied, who knows no other method of drawing near to God, but that of discussion and ratiocination.

" There is a far more certain way of approaching the Supreme Being, and one far better fitted to preserve us in communion with Him, when once we have been admitted to it. I mean, the way of taste and sentiment. Happy the believer, who, in the combats in which he is engaged with the enemies of his salvation, can oppose pleasures to pleasures, delights to delights ; the pleasures of prayer and meditation, to the pleasures of the world ; the delights of silence and retirement, to those of circles of dissipation, of spectacles ! Such a one will be steady in his course, were it merely on the ground of common rationality ; for, whoever possesses this, must



love that, which opens to him sources of joy. Such a one is bound to religion, by the identical ties which keep others in bondage to the world; that is, because he draws from religion the chief pleasure of his life. Such a person can never be wholly conquered by temptation, because, according to the strong language of an Apostle, ‘the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keeps his heart and mind’; that is, it preserves him, by the delights which it yields, from the moral possibility of falling into gross sin.”

Nothing, therefore, on the whole, can be more true or more important, than Mrs. Barbauld’s leading idea; since, considering human nature, it is self-evident, that a religion without taste and feeling, could not be a religion for man. It could furnish no counterpoise, to worldly temptations, or animal pleasures. It could not repel the tide of desire; nor charm down the hurricane of passion. It could neither occupy the mind, nor engage the heart. In fact, that alone can be a religion for man, which has properties respectively adapted to each of our faculties; which has truth for our reason, moral principle for our conscience, amiableness for our affections, and novelty, sublimity, and beauty, for our imagination. Such, evidently, are the uniform demands of the human mind. And an adequate plan for making us either virtuous, or happy, must provide, in due proportion, for them all.

When, however, our ingenious authoress proceeds to state, that the sentiment of which she speaks, has its seat in the imagination and the passions; and that “it has its source in that relish for the sublime, the vast, and the beautiful, by which we taste the charms of poetry and other compositions, that ad-

dress our finer feelings ;" that " it is in a great degree constitutional ;" and that " it is by no means found in exact proportion to the virtue of a character ;" she hazards positions, which a Catholic Christian must hesitate to admit : since, if this view were exactly just, piety would be reduced, from being the one thing needful, to a mere place among the adscititious graces of life. That the imagination nobly subserves the purposes of religion, and that that " bright and busy faculty" is never so naturally employed, as when it is the handmaid of devotion, will be admitted by every wise and pious Christian. But to suppose, that either the imagination, or the passions, are the actual seat of devotion, would be to make the very noblest quality we can possess, and the happiest habit of which we are capable, rest on the most precarious part of our nature.

There are feelings of our mind, which we term, not passions, but affections, which are clearly distinguishable from all the mere movements of imagination, and are as equable and steady, as our passions, properly so called, are fluctuating and fermentitious. These are, obviously, the noblest part of our nature ; they are the seat of our highest tastes, and the sources of all our deepest pains, and purest pleasures. Here then, evidently, it is, that we must fix the central seat of religion ; we are instructed to do so, equally by the voice of reason, and of Holy Scripture. According to both, there is no true piety, but in the love of God : and love is self-evidently the master affection of the heart. Devotion, therefore, can be no more said to have its " source in that relish for the sublime, the vast, and the beautiful, by which we taste the charms of poetry," &c. than disinterested friendship, or filial love, could be ascribed to this origin. We always

see, that, in proportion as either of these habits, or any similar habit, is ardent and deep, it employs the imagination, and is apt to excite the passions. But these latter faculties of the soul, are but the instruments, or adjuncts of our affection : they by no means belong to its essence ; and experience largely proves, that we are not to estimate the internal principle, merely by those more apparent movements. At the same time, it is most certain, that natural vividness of imagination will be called into action, in proportion as the object of affection is possessed of sublimity and beauty. Nothing, therefore, is more evident, than that, when our supreme affection is fixed on the first and greatest of objects, the original of all sublimity and beauty, the imagination will, of necessity, find in that object, both its amplest range, and its noblest exercise. “One of the final causes,” says Mr. Addison, “of our delight in any thing that is great, may be this. The supreme Author of our being has so formed the soul of man, that nothing but Himself can be its last, adequate, and proper happiness. Because, therefore, a great deal of our happiness must arise from the contemplation of his being, that he might give our souls a just relish of such a contemplation, he has made them naturally delight in the apprehension of what is great or unlimited. Our admiration immediately rises, at the consideration of any object, that takes up a great deal of room in the fancy ; and, by consequence, will improve into the highest pitch of astonishment and devotion, when we contemplate His nature, that is neither circumscribed by time, nor place, nor to be comprehended by the largest capacity of a created being.”

That “devotion is in a great degree constitutional,” and that “it is by no means found in exact proportion

to the virtue of a character," are positions of the same nature, with that which has just been questioned. They would, doubtless, be true, if devotion were a mere business of the imagination; but they cannot be admitted, respecting an affection of the heart. It would appear strange to assert, that honesty, or a love of truth, were, "in a great degree, constitutional," and were, "by no means, found, in proportion to the virtue of a character." Can it, then, be thought, that these, or any other moral qualities, are more essential to personal worth, than love to Him, who is at once the author of our being, and the archetype of excellence? Rather, what real virtue can there be, where there is not a supreme attachment of heart, to the living source, and eternal standard of virtue? We readily allow, that the various exercises and expressions of this highest and most valuable principle, may derive much of their sensible intenseness, and immediate efficacy, from those instrumental aids, which taste and imagination furnish. Where these faculties are less active, the pleasure may be less refined, the flight less elevated. But, if the substance of piety be in the mind, the sentiment of devotion will not be wanting. It will correspond, in its actual movements, to the other sensibiles of the individual; and will maintain amongst them that superiority which is reasonable, in what concerns so much greater an object. If this be in no degree the case, the fault will be evidently moral, not constitutional. There may, unquestionably, be a kind of devotional sentiment, where there is, as yet, no fixed principle of devotion. Mere natural elevation of mind may lead a person to think, occasionally, on religious subjects, with present feelings of interest and pleasure. Where there is a real taste for the sublime, the grandeur of divine objects cannot be

wholly overlooked; and it is utterly impossible that they should be adverted to, by a capable mind, and not produce answerable emotions. It is possible that cases of this kind were chiefly in Mrs. Barbauld's view; and, doubtless, her remark, when limited to these, will be found to agree with experience. But a true principle of devotion differs as much from such constitutional susceptibilities, as the result of the most attentive and elaborate culture differs from the rudest gift of mere nature. In fact, the spuriousness of that devotion, which derives its sole existence from natural taste, and has, of course, its seat exclusively in the imagination, is self-evidently evinced by what is said of it,—that “it is by no means found, in exact proportion to the virtue of a character;” for what can be more clear, than that the devotion which does not proportionately inspire virtue, is itself both fanciful and false? God is neither truly loved, nor rightly adored, if he be not loved and adored as the living source of virtue; and this feeling essentially involves in it the love of every thing that exalts, and the abhorrence of every thing that could degrade, an intelligent nature.

There may, I confess, be a sort of virtue without devotion, as well as a sort of devotion without true piety: as the wisdom of God saw fit, and, probably, the laws of nature may have required, that true religion should grow up in the world, and extend itself through society, by slow degrees, and a progressive operation, it was necessary that the qualities essential to the continuance of social life, and (we may add) to the capacitation of individuals for nobler principles, should not be matter of voluntary acquirement, but should exist, in the various proportions which divine

wisdom deemed meet, in the very substance of our nature. To this provision we owe much of the agreeableness, as well as safety, of our intercourse with mankind: indeed, if it were otherwise, no beast of the forest would be so fierce an enemy to man, as men would be to one another. Yet what, in general, are these valuable dispositions, but mere animal qualities, — of the same nature with gentleness in a horse, or fidelity in a dog? In man, it is allowed, they are capable of various degrees of improvement, — even without the direct influence of religious principle, — from education, reason, and advanced civilization: and, in proportion as these qualities are voluntarily cultivated, and disinterestedly loved, they certainly approach to the nature of true moral virtue. But that they have not in them the genuine essence of moral virtue, appears from this fact, — that where religious principle is absent, the most amiable characters, in other respects, are, in some instance or other, uniformly found inconsistent. No man considers the integrity of such persons, as any pledge for their command of temper; nor would it occasion any surprise, if the most benevolent, and even the most temperate of this class, were observed to be deficient in strict purity of conversation. I lament to acknowledge, that neither is an outward respect for religion itself, any security for complete moral consistency: in fact, this can be secured only by a radical principle of religion established in the heart. He who, with the psalmist, “sets God always before him”, and he alone, is the same person at all times, and in all places, — in his most public conduct, and in his inmost thoughts. The sun in the heavens does not more certainly communicate light and heat, to the orbs which revolve round him, than this holy sentiment, when fixed and

predominant in the soul, makes all our feelings pure, and all our movements virtuous.

As genuine virtue can thus be derived only from true religion, so true religion can be maintained and cherished, only by habitual devotion. For what is devotion, but the mind's actual communication with the source of its moral life? What the vital air, which we continually inhale, is to our corporeal life, that, and infinitely more, the ever-present Deity is, to the higher life of our immortal part; and that which the organ of respiration performs in the one case, is, with the strictest analogy, effected in the other, by the unforced and spontaneous actings of the heart, upon its first, and greatest object. Addison most truly observes, that faith and morality naturally produce each other; but he adds, that, in order to strengthen faith, no method "is so persuasive," as "an habitual adoration of the Supreme Being." "The devout man," says he, "does not only believe, but feels there is a Deity:—he has actual sensations of him. His experience concurs with his reason. He sees him more and more in all his intercourses with him, and, even in this life, almost loses his faith in conviction."<sup>1</sup>

Who will deny, that he, to whom such feelings as these have become habitual, begins, even on this earth, to taste the happiness of heaven? Who does not see, that our highest relishes for what is sublime, or vast, or beautiful, are here infinitely provided for; and that even our more common feelings of this nature must be inexpressibly heightened, in proportion as our minds thus rise into a serene and cloudless region;

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<sup>1</sup> Spec., No. 465.

and come, at length, as it were, within the growing dawn of an immortal day?

And, let me add, who is he that reads the Holy Scriptures with that piety, that philosophy, that taste, which their yet unfathomed excellencies indispensably require, and does not perceive, that this height of virtuous happiness, is that, to which those sacred oracles invite us, and are divinely fitted to raise us? that this, in a word, is what the Gospel sets before us as true Christianity; promising us, if we cordially implore it, that an omnipotent influence shall make our endeavours successful; and exemplifying the effects of that influence, on men of like passions with ourselves, so as to make our confidence as strong, as our instruction is perfect. Still, it is far from my purpose, in any thing I have said, to dispute the real value of natural good qualities, whether in the instance of manners, or of taste. Doubtless, what we derive from our birth, never can be a substitute for that, which is to be wrought in us only by the regenerating grace of Christ. But it no more follows, that such qualities are of no avail in the evangelic economy, than that gold and silver sink to the level of brass, in consequence of their being all cast in the same mould, and receiving the same royal impress. We may rather believe, that the final cause of those natural excellencies is, their aptitude to do proportionately high honour, to the operation of divine grace. Therefore, the more of native worth we discover in any person, the greater motive have we to wish, that true life might animate so fair a form; that the main spring might be added, to a machine so admirably constructed.

The scintillations of devotion, which, in higher minds, and especially in the morning of life, spring



up like a natural instinct, have, in a religious point of view, a still more interesting aspect. They obviously are not true piety, but they are intended to lead to it, by affording prelibations, however slight and transient, of its exquisite sweetness. They bear something of the same relation to the divine religion of the heart, that the bright colourings of an eastern cloud bear, to the actual beams of the yet unrisen luminary. They are the dim reflection of a far more glorious light; to whose approach they seem meant to engage our attention, and for whose appearance they invite us to prepare. Infinitely happy is that mind, that yields to these calls of Heaven. In themselves, they are, for the most part, but transient glimpses; and, if merely enjoyed for the moment, as a temporary though transporting pleasure, they will prove illusions, and soon be absorbed in deepening gloom. If, on the other hand, they are followed onward, as the giver of them intends, the wise king has long since told us the invaluable result:—"The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth, more and more, unto the perfect day."

THE DOCTRINE RESPECTING BAPTISM HELD BY  
THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

AMONGST the various subjects which have occupied the thoughts of religious men, in this age of controversy, none has excited more attention than the doctrine of Baptism, as maintained by the Church of England.

It is agreed, on all hands, that, according to our church, baptism is a sacrament of most important significancy; and that, considered as an external ordinance, it is the outward and visible sign of those inward and spiritual blessings, the possession of which ensures everlasting salvation: but the great point of debate has been, in what manner the external ordinance, and the inward blessing, are connected with each other.

Many have contended, that the ordinance and the blessing are not necessarily, nor even ordinarily, concurrent; and that, when they are concurrent, it is not in consequence of any divine virtue, attached to the external sacrament; but because its administration has been accompanied with a special exercise of faith and devotion.

Others have maintained, that the outward ordinance and the internal blessing are so far from being separable, that, in point of fact, they are the same thing; or, as it is usually expressed, that baptism is regeneration.

It may not be useless to enquire, whether the true doctrine of the Church of England, when attentively examined, will be found to accord with either of these theories; and whether it may not be clearly shown to be materially and practically different, from both the one, and the other.

I begin with considering the latter theory; because, if it be erroneous, the error implies simple mistake, rather than predilection for some contrary notion. They who maintain that baptism is regeneration, are not actuated by zeal for any consequent doctrine. They may, therefore, be regarded, rather as wishing to ascertain what the doctrine of the Church of England is, than to bend that doctrine to their own special purpose. Consequently, it may be hoped, that, if those theorists be proved in error, they will at least feel no displeasure at the attempt to disabuse them.

It must, then, be granted, in the first instance, that the language of many ancient writers appears to countenance the assertion, that baptism is regeneration. But it is necessary to enquire, in what sense the term baptism was used, in the early ages of the Church. It will be found that, in those times, the outward rite was contemplated as unlikely to be solicited, except by qualified recipients. The phraseology of the Catholic Church, on this subject, was formed, when Christianity had attractions only for the sincere; when to assume the Christian profession, was to hazard every thing, from which human nature recoils. In such circumstances, a disposition to receive the supernatural grace, as well as the external sign, was reckoned upon with moral certainty; and therefore, in common language, to be baptized, and to be regenerated, became synonymous expressions.

That it was in this view only, that the visible sign, and the invisible grace of baptism, were occasionally united in language, is proved by the fact, that, in certain instances, their disunion is expressly acknowledged. Thus, for example, St. Cyril, of Jerusalem, instructs his catechumens, that Simon Magus, though baptized, was not enlightened by the Holy Spirit; that his body, indeed, descended into the font; but that he was not buried and raised again with Christ.<sup>1</sup> Thus, also, Origen tells his hearers, that not all, who have been baptized with water, were baptized with the Holy Spirit; nor, on the contrary, were all the catechumens destitute of that spirit; for "I find," says he, "in Holy Scripture, some catechumens accounted worthy of the Holy Spirit, and others, after baptism, unworthy of the gifts of the Spirit." He goes on to adduce Cornelius, as an instance of the Holy Spirit being given before baptism; and Simon Magus, as having been baptized, yet refused the gift of the Spirit.<sup>2</sup> St. Augustine, too, similarly observes respecting Cornelius, that, in his case, sanctification by the Holy Spirit went before, and the sacrament of regeneration was added afterward.<sup>3</sup>

It follows, then, that, in the judgment of the ancient Church, the outward sacrament, and the inward blessing, were by no means considered as inseparably united, much less as identical; that they were concurrent only in such cases, as offered no obstruction to the entrance of the Holy Spirit: which fact, however, was generally relied upon in those early times.

That the Church of England, in her doctrine of

<sup>1</sup> St. Cyril. Hier. Præf. ad Cat. § a.

<sup>2</sup> Lardner on Origen. He quotes the Bened. Edit. vol. ii. p. 280.

<sup>3</sup> St. August. de Baptismo, Cont. Donat., Edit. Bened. t. ix. p. 140.

baptism, has strictly adhered to the ancient principles, might be largely shown ; but a single reference will be sufficient. When the revisers of 1661 were urged, by the non-conformists, not to insist on the recognition of every infant as "regenerate," their answer was, "Seeing that God's sacraments have their effects, when the receiver doth not, ponere obicem, put any bar against them, which children cannot do, we may say, in faith, of every child that is baptized, that he is regenerated by God's Holy Spirit."

Nothing more, therefore, is necessary to show, that, when, by regeneration, is understood the inward and spiritual grace of baptism, it cannot, according to the Church of England, be said, simply and without a proviso, that Baptism is regeneration ; for if this proposition were true, it must be always true, and could not depend upon any condition. Whereas, according to those from whose hands we receive our present formulary, the inwardly regenerating efficacy of baptism does depend on a condition ; because, in their judgment, a bar may exist, to prevent baptism from being, in the best and happiest sense, regeneration. I say, in the best and happiest sense, because there may be another notion of regeneration, beside that which is inward and spiritual, the identity of which with baptism there is no necessity to dispute. The non-conformists themselves acknowledged (in the conference at the Savoy, in 1661,) that "baptism, as an outward ordinance, is our visible, sacramental regeneration ;" but, as such, it must be regarded, as making a change in the receiver's circumstances, whether there be, or be not, a change in his mind or heart. He has contracted relations which are indelible ; and which tend, according as they are improved or abused, to infinite advantage, or to

infinite calamity. It is well known, that to revolutions of a like nature in common-life, Greek writers have applied the term *παλιγγενεσια* (regeneration); and Cicero, though writing in another language, employs this very word, to describe the change made in his circumstances, by his recall from exile.<sup>1</sup> In such a relative and external sense, therefore, regeneration may fairly be considered as inseparable from baptism; and, most probably, it was on this ground, not less than on that of charitable hope, that the language of early times, respecting baptism, was still retained, when the proofs of a sincere reception had become more questionable.

Nor was it solely on the authority of Josephus, of Philo, or of Cicero, that this external, or relative notion of regeneration was adopted. Our Redeemer himself might be thought to have countenanced it, by the expression "born of water." As it was his divine purpose, to establish an outward and visible kingdom upon earth, as well as one which was internal and invisible, the entrance of each individual into that external and visible kingdom, by an external and visible initiation, was, in its place and proportion, as necessary to his design, as initiation into the internal and invisible kingdom, by the inward operation of the Divine Spirit. In order, therefore, to mark this twofold necessity in the strongest manner, the all-wise Saviour annexes the same idea to the outward, as to the inward transaction; making the being born of water, as well as being born of the Spirit, indispensable to admission into his mystical kingdom.

It never can be thought, that, when our Lord

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<sup>1</sup> Epist. ad Attic., vi. 6.

spoke thus, he meant to give like importance to the outward sacrament, as to the internal grace; still less, that he has countenanced the confounding of the one with the other. The distinct agencies which the words imply, namely, the ministry of man, and the operation of the eternal Spirit, make it impossible, either to equalise, or confound, these two indispensable requisites to the full Christian character. But, on the other hand, our Lord's words do appear to recognise a sacramental regeneration, as well as an internal and spiritual regeneration; and, consequently, to authorise the application of the term in the former sense, whatever may be the ground of its applicability in the latter.

It cannot be doubted, that the Church of England had this extended use of the term regeneration in view, when, in speaking of the inward blessing of baptism, distinctly from the outward ordinance, she employs the expression, spiritual regeneration. There would clearly have been no need of the additional epithet, if the word regeneration admitted only of an inward and spiritual meaning; while, at the same time, we are certain, that, in drawing up the formula of baptism, the expressions, as well as sentiments, of the earlier Church, were continually kept in view, in order that whatever had been uninterruptedly and universally received, should be, if not distinctly recognised, at least not contradicted.

On the whole, then, it would appear, that it is not contrary either to the language of the early church, or of our Lord himself, and also that it is at least indirectly sanctioned by the Church of England, to say, in a certain sense, that baptism is regeneration; that is, when, by regeneration, is merely meant, the relative, and circumstantial change implied, in be-

coming a member of Christ's visible church, and a professing subject of his mystical kingdom.

But, if regeneration be understood in a deeper and more inward sense, if it be taken for that "spiritual regeneration," which has been just referred to, then it will be necessary to enquire, whether it be possible to maintain, on any ground of rational consistency, that baptism is, in that sense, regeneration.

Baptism is sometimes used comprehensively, for the entire sacrament, including not only the outward and visible sign, but the inward and spiritual grace. At other times, it is used distinctly for the outward ordinance, which it is always within human competency to administer. We have an example of the comprehensive use of the term baptism, in the beginning of the Catechism, when the catechumen is made to say, that, in baptism, he was made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. We have also an instance of its more limited application, in that passage of the baptismal service, which has been more than once adverted to, where the minister prays for the infant, that he, "coming to God's holy baptism, may receive remission of his sins by spiritual regeneration:" the reception of the outward ordinance is here a matter of human certainty; while the inward and spiritual grace is implored from above.

Now, if we take baptism in the comprehensive sense, it cannot be identified with spiritual regeneration, because a whole cannot be identified with one of its parts. If we take baptism in the more limited sense, the proposition in question becomes still more inadmissible, inasmuch as it is impossible, that the outward and visible sign should be the inward and spiritual grace. The words of the baptismal service, therefore, which



have been just quoted, are of themselves sufficient to fix the sense of the Church of England, on the particular point now before us. According to those words, "spiritual regeneration" is not identical with the ordinance of baptism, but is the effect of an heavenly influence on the mind and heart; which, it is confidently trusted, will be communicated, in and through that ordinance, to all susceptible receivers.

How consistent it was, thus to distinguish the inward and spiritual blessing, from the outward and visible sign, will be seen with greater clearness, by attending to the effects ascribed to the grace of baptism, in every part of the service. This grace, it will be observed, is represented, throughout, as an effective principle, which, in proportion as it is possessed, regulates affection, temper, and conduct. It is a character given to the inner man, which, if retained, must manifest itself by corresponding results; and which cannot coexist with the predominance of sin. These characteristics of spiritual regeneration are essentially implied, in its union with "remission of sins." Bondage to sins, and remission of sins, are perfectly incompatible with each other. The slave of sin, must be under the guilt of sin. So soon, therefore, as the baptized person habitually yields to temptation, he loses "the remission of his sins," in whatever sense we understand the expression; and if remission of sins be lost, spiritual regeneration, which involves remission of sins, must be lost also.

Now, as this forfeiture is undeniably incurred, by numberless persons who had been baptized, it follows of necessity, that to have been baptized, and to be spiritually regenerated, are two distinct and separable descriptions; the former of which, we may readily

believe, can never be lost, by the person who has once received it; whereas the very nature of the latter so evinces it to be perishable, that to deny it to be perishable, is to rob it of its essential character. Spiritual regeneration would be any thing but spiritual, if it could be retained by a willing votary of the world, the flesh, or the Devil.

The truth of this position will appear yet more clearly, if we attend to the significant import of particular expressions. We are instructed, that to be spiritually regenerated, implies the commencing death of "all carnal affections," and the commencing life of "all things belonging to the spirit." The spiritually regenerated person receives "the fulness of God's grace," not that in due time he may enter amongst, but that he may "ever remain in the number of God's faithful and elect children." He is, accordingly, regarded as God's own child by adoption; as dead to sin, as alive to righteousness, and as buried with Christ in his death. There would, in truth, be no consistency in the term "spiritual regeneration," if it did not comprehend these particulars, either in its essence, or in its consequences; but spiritual regeneration, thus explained, can never be confounded with the mere reception of baptism, or with the indissoluble relation to Christ's visible kingdom, which that reception involves. The baptized person never can become unbaptized; but he who has been made dead to sin, and alive unto righteousness, may again become dead to righteousness, and alive to sin; that is, he may, through unfaithfulness, lose the blessing of "spiritual regeneration." For this, as expanded in the tenour of the baptismal service, could not consist, for one hour, with the decided predominance of moral evil. To be dead to

sin, and alive unto righteousness, is, in point of fact, the essence of spiritual regeneration ; therefore, when sin is deliberately yielded to, spiritual regeneration is lost.

The 16th Article brings this point, if it were possible, to a still clearer conclusion. Its design is, to censure the Novatians, who held, “ that, when baptismal grace was once forfeited, there remained no place for repentance.” In contradiction to this error, the article asserts, that “ not every deadly sin, willingly committed after baptism, is sin against the Holy Ghost, and unpardonable ; that after we have received the Holy Ghost, we may depart from grace given, and fall into sin ; and, by the grace of God, we may rise again, and amend our lives.”

These words are the more worthy of attention, because, in no other instance, is either the connection, or the distinction, between the outward sign, and the inward grace of baptism, more clearly propounded. In the commencing words, the inward grace of the sacrament is regarded as, in some sense, a thing of course ; for the term, deadly sin (as invariably used by theologians), implies an antecedent life of grace in the soul, which an act of presumptuous sin cannot but extinguish ; and the words which follow, not only proceed on the same supposition, but they give the strongest idea, of the initial life of grace, conferred through baptism, that could be expressed in language. “ After we have received the Holy Ghost, we may depart from grace given, and fall into sin.”

As in the first sentence, then, we had the connection between the outward ordinance and the inward grace,—in these latter expressions they are no less clearly distinguished. We have done, as it were, with the outward ordinance ; it served its important

purpose, and is never again to be repeated. Our attention is, therefore, now confined, to the grace which it conveyed; and this, we are here distinctly told, is as perishable, as baptism itself is indelible.

“Receiving the Holy Ghost,” and “grace given,” are obviously, different terms, for the same idea, with which “spiritual regeneration,” also, must be considered as identical. To prove this identity, would be a waste of words, as the three expressions have, self-evidently, the same meaning. To assert, therefore, that we may depart from “grace given,” is to teach, that we may banish from our hearts that holy spirit, which we had once received, and lose the “spiritual regeneration,” of which we had been possessed; for nothing more unreasonable could be imagined, than that, when we depart from God’s grace, we should retain God’s Holy Spirit, or that, when the Holy Spirit had gone from us, spiritual regeneration, which is the result of his presence and vital influence, should still remain.

The distinction which is thus established, between having been baptized, and continuing spiritually regenerate, is, however, not left to be discovered by examination; but is, in truth, inculcated on every catechumen, within the pale of our establishment. Few members of the Church of England, it may be hoped, have forgotten these weighty words, — “I heartily thank our heavenly Father, that he hath called me to this state of salvation; and I pray unto God to give me his grace, that I may continue in the same unto my life’s end.”

That the state of salvation, in this passage of the Catechism, means precisely the same thing as spiritual regeneration in the baptismal service, is too obvious to require argument. The point which

demands attention is, that this state of salvation is here represented, as a blessing which may be lost. "I pray unto God," says the catechumen, "to give me his grace, that I may continue in the same." There would be neither need, nor room for this petition, if continuance in the state of salvation were a matter of absolute certainty; as, on the other hand, to pray for divine grace, that we may continue in this state, intimates both how this state is to be preserved, and that it is worth preserving.

To pray for "continuance in the same" state, would be a presumptuous and dangerous measure, if that state did not imply a pledge of everlasting safety. If it were only a state of salvability, and not strictly of salvation, the use of God's grace would have been, not to continue in the same state to the end, but so to improve it as to be advanced to a better. This state of salvation, therefore, can be no other, than that which theologians have called the state of grace, a state which, we are already taught, may be "departed from;" which we are here instructed can be preserved, by exercising, with fidelity, the grace we have received, and imploring the throne of grace continually, for fresh supplies; but which, if so preserved, will infallibly terminate in everlasting peace.

Enough, I conceive, has now been said, to explain the distinction made by the Church of England, between baptism, as an indelible badge of the Christian profession, and the retention of that inward grace, or spiritual regeneration, which this holy sacrament is intended to convey. But it would seem that something farther is pressed upon us, by the passages which have been adduced; namely, the importance of keeping this distinction continually in view. It is impossible not to see, that, in the judgment of the

church, the inward grace of baptism, really possessed, and effectually exercised, is, itself, the prime blessing of the Gospel ; and the pledge, as well as principle, of all spiritual benefits, which we are authorised to expect, or bound to pursue. Nothing less would be found to be the concurrent import, of all that might be quoted from the Common Prayer-book on the subject ; and it will be obvious, that, in every instance, the most substantial results are supposed to follow, both in heart and life.

The assertion, therefore, that all these energetic representations, are to be resolved into the one simple fact of being baptized, either convicts the Church of England of having involved a point, the plainest and simplest that could occupy discourse, in disproportioned figure, and gratuitous mystery ; or it convicts those who make the assertion, of deliberately suppressing, as far as in them lies, an entire head of the established doctrines, which, if not as strangely nugatory as they would represent it, must be of unspeakable importance. From the evidence which has been stated, it may be judged, which of the two suppositions is the more reasonable ; and it will remain for those, who, by way of defending the church, have placed themselves within the horns of such a dilemma, to reflect dispassionately, whether the rejection of their theory is not demanded, at once by their fidelity as churchmen, and their consistency as theologians.

For, in addition to what has been observed, it ought also to be considered, whether they, who, to raise the value of baptism, would identify it with regeneration, do not really accomplish the work of their antagonists more effectually, than they do it themselves. Even these latter allow, that the outward and visible sign is sometimes accompanied, by an inward and spiritual

grace. But, if it were true that spiritual regeneration is nothing else but baptism, would there, in truth, be any such thing at all, as inward and spiritual grace? If this be any thing, it must be distinguishable from the mere ministerial act, which it is conceived to accompany: if it be not distinguishable from that act, theoretically or practically, it is nothing. Is not this, then, another instance of extremes running into each other? Of that which is intended to be the extreme of orthodoxy, sinking, in point of fact, into the extreme of Socinianism?

On the whole, if the church be permitted to speak for herself, does she not clearly assert, that there is, indeed, an inward and spiritual grace, which baptism, as a sign, betokens, and, as a means, is intended to convey; that this grace, when really possessed, must have a proportionate influence, both on the inward, and outward man; and that, where no such influence exists, however certainly the grace of spiritual regeneration may have been possessed, it is now possessed no longer.

I now proceed to consider the remaining question, namely, to what extent the Church of England maintains the concurrence of the inward and spiritual grace, with the external sacrament of baptism?

It may, then, in the first place, be safely asserted, that, where the sacrament of baptism is administered to adults, the Church of England holds the concurrence of the inward grace to be no other than conditional. We learn from the Catechism, that, in order to the effectual reception of baptism, adults must be qualified by repentance and faith. These preliminaries, it is said, are "required of persons to be baptized." Therefore, if what is "required" be wanting, it is a necessary consequence, that the defaulters should not

receive the blessing, communicated to qualified subjects.

This result is inevitable ; not only on equitable grounds, but because such adults as are impenitent and faithless, are morally incapable of an inward and spiritual blessing. Where the faculties are in exercise, sin, if not hated, must be loved ; and righteousness, if not desired, must be disliked and depreciated. Full-grown human nature cannot remain, for one moment, in a state of moral neutrality.

The question, therefore, is narrowed, to the case of infant receivers ; and the point to be settled is, do all infants, who are baptized, infallibly participate in the inward and spiritual grace, which the sacrament of baptism is intended to convey ?

In ascertaining the judgment of the Church of England, on this important subject, we must attend only to her own authoritative decisions. It is a well known fact, that divines of the Church of England have, in this particular instance, shown singular disagreement. Divine may be so quoted against divine, as perfectly to neutralise this kind of evidence. The unadulterated records of the church herself, can alone yield rational proof, of what the church actually believes, on this much debated point.

Let us, then, examine, in the first place, the language of the form for the public baptism of infants. It was evidently intended, to make this service an authentic vehicle of instruction, respecting the sacred rite with which it is connected ; to ascertain its import is, consequently, to learn, in the most direct and certain manner, what the Church of England believes, on the subject of infant baptism.

Now, can it be disputed, that, in every prayer to God, and in every address to the assistants, the in-



ward and spiritual effect of this sacrament, on the infant receiver, is relied upon as a result, not of mere probability, but of absolute and infallible certainty ?

As an irrefragable ground for this confidence, an appeal is made to that remarkable account in the gospel, of our Lord's receiving the little children which were brought to him ; and in perfect assurance, that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, the sponsors are encouraged not to doubt, but earnestly to believe, that he will likewise favourably receive the infant which they present ; " that he will embrace him with the arms of his mercy, that he will give unto him the blessing of eternal life, and make him partaker of his everlasting kingdom."

What it is to be embraced in the arms of divine mercy, is explained in the next exhortation, by recapitulating the chief matter of the preceding petitions. " Ye have prayed," it is said, " that the Lord Jesus Christ would vouchsafe to receive this child, to release him of his sins, to sanctify him with the Holy Ghost, to give him the kingdom of heaven, and everlasting life." And the same ideas are expanded, with new force and clearness, in a following prayer, where it is implored, " that the old Adam in the child may be so buried, that the new man may be raised up in him ; that all carnal affections may die in him, and that all things belonging to the Spirit may live and grow in him."

Some of these expressions have been already adduced, for the purpose of showing, that the spiritual grace of baptism, which includes such real and substantial results, cannot be confounded with the mere reception of the external rite. But every expression, in the baptismal service, which bespeaks the belief of

an inward and spiritual grace, distinct from the outward sign, proves equally, that, in the judgment of our church, infant receivers of baptism are, without exception, partakers of that grace, inasmuch as it is to children universally, who are brought to the baptismal font, that those expressions are to be applied.

Nor can it, by any possibility, be objected, that this application is meant to be prospective, and, therefore, conditional. There are, indeed, expressions, which can no otherwise be understood, because they necessarily include the idea of future free agency. But, that the inward and spiritual grace itself, comprehending every benefit and blessing of the Christian covenant that infancy can receive, is reckoned upon as immediate and infallible, appears from the language used in the sequel of the service; which not only expresses reliance on present communication, but, at length, solemnly thanks God for its being actually made.

Reliance 'on present communication is expressed in the prayer, "Sanctify this water to the mystical washing away of sin." These words contemplate an actual operation of divine power, through the appointed instrument, wherever there is no bar in the subject. They imply a heavenly influence to unite itself with the water, and to make the ablution of the body effectual, through divine concurrence, to the purification of the soul. Doubtless this hope might be expressed, without assurance of its fulfilment; and it is thus expressed, with no verbal difference, in the baptism of adults. But the conclusive certainty, with which "the mystical washing away of sin" is relied upon, in the case of infants, will be perceived, when it is known, that the very persons<sup>1</sup>,

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<sup>1</sup> The Revisers in 1661.

who have been already quoted, as asserting the regeneration of every baptized infant, because an infant could oppose no bar to God's grace, were also the inserters of that particular petition, which we are now considering. The sense, therefore, in which it was meant to be understood, respecting infants, is indisputable; and, so understood, it fixes the same meaning on the subsequent petition, — "And grant that this child, now to be baptized, may receive the fulness of thy grace, and ever remain in the number of thy faithful and elect children."

But, if even this decisive evidence were wanting, the language of the thanksgiving, which follows the act of baptizing, would prove, that the Church of England had, at all times, held the outward sign to be, to infants, the vehicle of the inward and spiritual grace. On this sole ground, could "heartly thanks" be given, to the Father of mercies, for having regenerated the baptized infant with his Holy Spirit, and for having received him for his own child by adoption; and on the same principle only, could he be declared, a "partaker of the death of Christ." These words have been already quoted against those, who, by asserting that baptism is regeneration, would resolve the inward and spiritual grace, into the mere reception of the outward sign; and if they are conclusive on this point, they equally establish the spiritual regeneration of every duly baptized infant; because, to every such child, they unequivocally and solemnly ascribe that inward and spiritual blessing.

Not to admit the truth of this observation, would be deeply to assail, either the good sense, or the integrity of those, who drew up our established forms; for, had they contemplated nothing, in baptism, but an incorporation into the visible church, and had they

merely entertained a charitable hope, that the baptized infant would, in God's good time, become the subject of saving grace, it would have been an easy thing to find terms, apt and natural for their purpose. But, instead of this, they have used the strongest expressions, by which it would be possible to describe the effectual influence of God's holy spirit on the inner man. To have employed such expressions, therefore, in any other than their obvious and only rational sense, would have been to involve the Church of England in a gratuitous trifling with the holiest things, which might have been thought more likely to incur an anathema, than to draw down blessing. It would, in truth, be hard to say, which was greater, the profaneness, or the folly, of so strange a proceeding.

If these arguments could be strengthened, they would derive additional force, from the remarkable variation of language, which is found in the thanksgiving after the baptism of adults. It is true that these, also, in the address to the assistants, are pronounced regenerate; and not so to esteem them in human judgment, thus coming of their own accord to the baptismal font, would ill accord with that charity which hopeth all things. Besides, there might probably also have been a view to that extrinsic import of the term regenerate, which has already been sufficiently noticed.

But the fact which deserves observation, is, that God is not thanked (as in the case of infants) for having regenerated them by his holy spirit, or for having made them his own children by adoption; nor is one word said of their death to sin, or of their participation in the death of Christ. All this, doubtless, is to be hoped concerning them. But it would

have been an excess of presumption to tell the Searcher of hearts, that effects were positively produced, when, in order to such effects, the adult receiver of baptism must possess qualifications, of which God alone could take cognisance. It is well known, that this service was first introduced by the revisers in 1661; who have been already quoted, as refusing to admit any intimation of doubt, respecting the spiritual regeneration of baptized infants, because, in their case, no bar could be opposed to the saving grace of God. Where, therefore, notwithstanding all that charity could hope, a bar might, by possibility, be opposed, consistency forbade the admission of any positive or conclusive expression.

But there is a striking instance of this just distinction between infants and adults, in the early part of the baptismal service, which must not be overlooked. In the exhortation after the passage from St. Mark's gospel, which is introduced in the baptism of infants, it is said, without reserve, — "Doubt ye not, therefore, but earnestly believe, that he (the Lord Jesus Christ) will likewise favourably receive this present infant," and "that he will embrace him with the arms of his mercy." Whereas, in the baptism of adults, in the exhortation which follows the passage of scripture used in their case, namely, our Lord's discourse with Nicodemus, in the 3d chapter of St. John, the corresponding sentence is thus qualified: — "Doubt ye not, therefore, but earnestly believe, that he will favourably receive these present persons, truly repenting, and coming unto him by faith." The limited language, in this instance, proves, that the language respecting baptized infants would not have been left absolute, if it had not been felt to

be the just expression, of what the Church of England believed upon the subject.

In addition to every other evidence, an appeal, on this point, might be made, to the entire spirit and tenour of the baptismal service. It is obviously, on certain theological grounds, that the communication of internal grace, to all infants, in baptism, can alone be disputed. It is taken for granted, by a well known class of theologists, that, since the fall of Adam, the human race has been under a superincumbent curse; which they do not regard as, in the very first instance, removed, by the gracious intervention of the second Adam, and, for his sake, succeeded by an equally universal covenant of mercy, (a truth deducible from the first promise, — “The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head<sup>1</sup>,”) but it is their opinion, that the general malediction remains the same as ever, except so far as it is removed from individuals, whom God is pleased to choose as the objects of his favour. As, therefore, it would be contradictory to this theory, to suppose the divine mercy actually extended, to every baptized infant; so, on the principle of God’s unrestricted benignity to every child of Adam, there could be no rational ground for doubting, that, in such an institution as the sacrament of baptism, the outward sign should, in the case of infants, be uniformly accompanied, by

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<sup>1</sup> It seems as if what St. Paul teaches on this subject (Rom. v.) was unaccountably overlooked. He tells us (ver. 14.) that Adam was “a type of him that was to come:” he says (ver. 15.) that the free gift is “much more” than commensurate to the primeval offence; and (ver. 18) he makes this important conclusion, that as, by one offence, “all men” have incurred a liability to condemnation, so, by one righteousness, “all men” are endued with a capability of attaining “justification of life.” Let him that can, draw any other meaning out of the original words.

an inward and spiritual grace. Now, whoever reads the baptismal service for children with attention, will perceive, that there is not, in any part of it, the slightest intimation, even of the first principles, by which the stern theology now alluded to is supported. The one sole evil which the service contemplates, is, the hereditary taint naturally communicated, from the vitiated parent of mankind, to the whole human race. It is most justly assumed, that this inherent corruption, if left uncorrected, would necessarily obstruct the divine complacency ; but it is no less expressly taken for granted, that, as it exists in infants, it excites, instead of impeding, the divine benevolence. There is not, from first to last, the remotest hint of a universal malediction, a general condemnation on account of a broken law, the removal of which, from each favoured individual, must constitute the first effectual exercise of saving mercy. It is, accordingly, not the guilt, but the "innocency," of children, in the sight of God, which is reckoned upon : innocency, not as opposed to that "fault and corruption of nature," which can be corrected only by divine grace, but innocency, as opposed to every thing, which could obstruct, or even lessen, the divine philanthropy.

With respect to the inward evil, which is to be counteracted by the grace of baptism, the strongest expressions are used : but it is to this point that they are confined. It is said, "Wash him and sanctify him with the Holy Ghost, that he, being delivered from thy wrath, may be received into the ark of Christ's church : " that is (allowing each term its proper force), "so work upon this child by thy saving power, as to remove from him whatever could offend thy infinite purity." Thus only can we understand the being delivered from God's wrath, through sanc-

tifying influence communicated from himself. In one of the exhortations to the sponsors, it is said, — “Ye have prayed that our Lord Jesus Christ would vouchsafe to receive ‘this child,’ to release him of his sins,” &c. But in what sense to release him? A foregoing petition, which is evidently referred to, gives the answer; — “We call upon thee for this infant, that he, coming to thy holy baptism, may receive remission of his sins by spiritual regeneration,” This important passage, which has been already repeatedly adverted to, explains, that “to release the infant of his sins,” is to deliver him from the thralldom and pollution of his corrupted nature; this being, evidently, the “remission of sins,” which is to be obtained through spiritual regeneration; whereas, it is clear that, on the principles of those rigid theologists, that removal of malediction, which they regard as remission or forgiveness, must, in the order of nature, precede the gift of the sanctifying Spirit; such a gift being the strongest possible evidence, of paternal kindness and mercy already in operation.

As, therefore, it is the very gift which the Church of England, in the baptismal service, at once, and in the first instance, implores; so is the blessing asked, and the communication relied upon, as if no imaginable bar was in the way of its accomplishment, and as if that accomplishment was infallibly assured, by the memorable words of incarnate Deity, respecting little children, which had been recited from the Gospel. Accordingly, proceeding on this immutable ground, every expression, in the entire form, bespeaks cheerfulness and certainty. It is, as if the spirit of the divine transaction, on which it so specially founds itself, were transfused into every part of it; and as



if the God of love was relied upon, at the impulse of a benevolence congenial to his own.

It is felt, that little children, as such, are invited into his kingdom. It is believed, that here, as elsewhere, he is no respecter of persons ; and that he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. To his goodness, therefore, every infant candidate for baptism is unreservedly committed ; and, in the confidence that, in that goodness, there is no “variable-ness, neither shadow of turning,” as soon as the appointed vehicle of blessing has been duly applied, the communication of that blessing is rested in, with unqualified confidence, and grateful acknowledgment.

The baptismal service has been sufficiently remarked upon. But a passage, already quoted from the Catechism, again demands attention, as expressly recognising the spiritual regeneration of every baptized infant. After what has been observed, it need not be proved, that to be “made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven,” is to be spiritually regenerated ; and it has been shown, that the state of salvation, constituted by those privileges, means a state, not of salvability only, but of efficacious grace, and, if retained to the end, of everlasting security. The point, then, at this time to be attended to, is, that the church of England makes every youthful catechumen thank God, for this invaluable blessing, and implore grace, not that thereby spiritual regeneration may be effected, but that, as being already possessed, it may never after be forfeited. That such language should be universally enjoined, would be presumptuous and absurd, on any other supposition, but that of saving grace being universally communicated to baptized infants, and of its being still retained, through God’s

blessing on parental care and instruction. Undoubtedly, this latter reckoning is made only with charitable hope; the liability to fall from this state being, in the words themselves, most impressively intimated; but it is such a hope, as bespeaks infallible certainty of what the catechumen had once possessed, and must consequently still possess, except there had been a fall into deadly sin, through departure "from grace given." This, also, it will be observed, is exactly the principle on which the Church of England proceeds, in the subsequent solemnity of confirmation. Here, as in baptism, obviously in the same sense, and almost in the same words, "Almighty God" is addressed, as having vouchsafed to regenerate "the persons to be confirmed, not only" by water, but by the Holy Ghost, "and as having" given them forgiveness of "all their sins." A more absolute and unreserved recognition, could not be expressed in words; and it would be impossible to maintain, either its religious fitness, or its rational consistency, if the spiritual regeneration of infants, universally, in baptism, were not admitted.

It may, perhaps, be objected to the conclusiveness of this remark, that the adult receivers of baptism are, according to the Church of England, to receive confirmation in the same form of words, although, in their case, there can be no positive certainty that the terms are applicable; how, then, it may be asked, can the same unvaried expressions, have a conditional import in the one case, and an absolute import in the other? I answer, that there would be force in this objection, if those who composed the order of confirmation had either intended, or foreseen, that use of it, on which the objection is founded. But it was impossible that adult receivers of baptism should

have been in their thoughts, when they themselves made no provision for such a case. It has been already mentioned, that the form for baptizing such as are of riper years, originated with the revision, in 1661; and, on examining the form for confirming, it will be found to correspond to the case of those alone, who had been baptized in infancy. In the preface with which it commences, the time of receiving confirmation is expressly adjusted to this end, that “children, being now come to the years of discretion, may themselves, with their own mouth and consent, openly before the Church, ratify and confirm, what their godfathers and godmothers promised for them in their baptism.”

Accordingly, the persons who present themselves, are solemnly required to renew the promise, which was made in their name at their baptism; and to assume, in their own persons, all which was then undertaken for them, by their godfathers and godmothers; which words, be it observed, are so exclusively applicable to those baptized in infancy, that they cannot, without gross inconsistency, be made use of, in the case of those who were baptized in riper years. For, it will be found, that, in the form drawn up by the revisers for that purpose, the engagements are made, not by the godfathers and godmothers, but by the parties themselves. Such persons, therefore, cannot, with truth or reason, say, that they renew the promise made in their names, and ratify and confirm the same in their own persons, inasmuch as, in baptism, they acted in their own persons, and the promise was made by themselves, not by others for them.

The inference therefore to be made, from the use of the same words, in confirming both classes of the baptized, is really no other than this, that the re-

visers, in leaving the unaltered form to be used for adult receivers of baptism, were strangely inadvertent. We may easily conceive, that the incongruity to the case of adults, might have escaped notice; but it is impossible to conceive, that, if it had been adverted to, it would have remained uncorrected. The inconsistency is so palpable, that it could not have been suffered to remain. They who were so careful, to adapt the service of baptism to the case of adults, would not have been less careful, had the thought occurred, in the case of confirmation; least of all, would they have left a dissonance, which their own new baptismal service had occasioned, and which a few alterations in the confirmation service, to be used where necessary, would easily have removed.

It is not necessary to show, that such an oversight in the revisers, cannot affect, either the clearness, or the conclusiveness, of the confirmation service, as it was drawn up by the reformers, and stands unaltered in the Common Prayer Book.

Having thus, as I conceive, sufficiently proved, that, in the judgment of the Church of England, the spiritual grace of baptism is communicated, in that ordinance, to all infant receivers, I wish again to draw attention to an important result of all which has been said, inasmuch as, though already repeatedly intimated, it cannot, for practical purposes, be too much kept in view; namely, that, in whatever light this early blessing has been placed before us, whether as the mystical washing away of sin, sanctification by the Holy Spirit, remission of sins by spiritual regeneration, enrolment among God's faithful and elect children, a death unto sin, a being buried with Christ in his death, reception of the Holy Ghost,

grace given, or simply as a state of salvation, to be continued in, through that grace, unto the end, it can, from its obvious nature, remain only in minds, where it is in some measure yielded to and cherished; but that, where, on the contrary, it is resisted and repelled, or, in the language of the article already quoted, "departed from," there, as long as such unfaithfulness continues, the spiritual blessing conveyed in baptism is actually (though, through the tender mercy of God, not irrecoverably) forfeited and lost.

The expressions just recited, could have no rational meaning, they would be, to use St. Peter's language, "great swelling words of vanity," if, notwithstanding their apparent significancy, they, in point of fact, denoted nothing, which made any sensible difference in moral character, or which notified itself, by any correspondent result, in the mind or conduct of the possessor.

But, on the other hand, let these terms be understood in their natural import, and then, nothing less can be concluded, than that a vital germ of all virtuous dispositions, and pious affections, is implanted in the mind of the baptized infant; a germ, however, which it is not intimated will grow up of itself; but which, it is relied upon, will expand, under that auxiliary culture, which the Divine order has made indispensable, if not blighted in its opening by that perverseness, which, on the supposition of free agency, must necessarily be incidental.

However conceivable, then, it is, that such a pregnant principle of good should remain, at once, undeveloped, and uninjured, during the period of infancy and childish weakness, (as conceivable as that any other mental capability should equally exist, and equally lie dormant,) it certainly cannot be thought

that that holy and heavenly tendency, which baptismal grace, as explained by the church of England, necessarily implies, should continue to be possessed, when the time has arrived for reason and conscience to do their duty; and when, instead of being listened to, they are resisted and trampled on. If this principle be sincerely, however weakly, obeyed and guarded, there can be no doubt of its continuance, and there will be every hope of its advancement; but, if it be grossly and obstinately resisted, its extinction must ensue. It would be as reasonable to maintain, that ~~he~~ who was once possessed of piety and righteousness, ~~must~~ still possess them, after having apostatized into irreligion and profligacy, as to assert, that spiritual regeneration, as explained by the church of England, should continue, after spiritual and animal wickedness has become predominant in the heart and life.

The deeply practical sense, in which the church of England holds this conclusion, is discernible in different parts of her devotional formulary. Though she evidently wishes, as far as possible, to consider her children in the state of grace, she repeatedly reminds them, that they may, too probably, have “departed from grace given,” and, consequently, be in a state of deadly sin.

The church particularly impresses this awful warning, in every repetition of the litany, by interceding with God, distinctly, for such as are in the state of grace, for such as are in a state of deadly sin, and also for such as form an intermediate class; that is, who have either not entirely lapsed, or, rather, if lapsed and in part recovered, are not yet completely and conscientiously reinstated.

The words of the petition are in every churchman’s

memory; the comprehensive and weighty meaning may not have been as generally adverted to.

“ That it may please thee to strengthen such as do stand, to comfort and help the weak-hearted, to raise up them that fall.”

The least attention will show, that there could not have been a clearer or more practical classification. Those who stand, are obviously the settled subjects of the state of grace; that is, they live habitually in the fear and love of God, in the spirit of true devotion, and in constant watchfulness against the world, the flesh, and the devil. They, therefore, through divine grace, rise superior to every gross temptation; and from day to day enjoy, in the secret of their hearts, that peace of God which passeth all understanding.

It is impossible to attach a lower sense, to so significant a term; a thousand words could not describe more conclusively, the state in which the church wishes her faithful children to be kept, and to which she is anxious that all penitents should be restored, and all wanderers should return. The vague and frigid theory, which contents itself with a regeneration, implying, not salvation, but mere salvability, imperceptible when possessed, and too unsubstantial to be forfeited, has no place here. They who stand, in contradistinction to those who are weak-hearted, and in opposition to those who fall, cannot be confounded, with such as fluctuate between sin and repentance; and derive all their comfort, not from consciousness of the Redeemer's effectual grace within them, but from abstract reliance on what he did for them, in the days of his flesh.

Doubtless, the Church of England never loses sight of the merits of our blessed Saviour; but she confides

in them, not as a substitute for internal grace, but as an infallible security, that this grace will be freely communicated to all who cordially ask it ; that it will be amply given, in proportion to faithful improvement, and more urgent exigence ; and that, to those who substantially retain it, those unallowed offences, which arise from the original frailty that remains, says the IXth article, “ even in them that are regenerated,” but which imply weakness, rather than wickedness, will not be imputed to our condemnation.

The Church of England, therefore, does the truest honour, both to the mercy of God, and to the merits of our Redeemer, by specifying a sure evidence in the heart and conduct, that we are actual objects of mercy, and that Christ’s merits have availed in our behalf, namely, our “ standing fast in the liberty, wherewith Christ had made us free.”

By this characteristic, whether retained from baptism, or recovered through repentance and conversion, our church recognises living members of Christ’s mystical body ; and deeming all such to be in the path, which, if not deserted, leads infallibly to life eternal, she merely prays for their advancement and confirmation : “ that it may please thee to strengthen such as do stand.”

The import of this brief, but significant supplication, will be best learned, from a former part of the same comprehensive formula. They who stand, are obviously those who possess the blessing implored, in that preceding petition : “ that it may please thee to give us an heart to love and dread thee, and diligently to live after thy commandments.” To pray, therefore, that such may be strengthened, is to express, in one word, the matter of the next following petition : “ that it may please thee to give unto all thy people increase



of grace, to hear meekly thy word, to receive it with pure affection, and to bring forth the fruits of the spirit."

To increase in grace, and to be strengthened in grace, are evidently the same thing; and in proportion as this blessing is realized, God's word will be heard with meekness, that is, will be submitted to without reserve; it will be received with pure affection; the mixture of love and dread, which was indispensable to "babes in Christ," will give place to that perfect love which casteth out fear; and the exertions, which were then necessary to preserve a good conscience, will be, at once, rewarded and superseded, by a spontaneous harvest of spiritual virtues, duty having become delight, and goodness a second nature.

But the church, in attending to those who are her glory, forgets not the feeble portion of her flock, nor even the wanderers from her fold. For the first, she implores "comfort and help;" as if their hope needed to be brightened, as well as their resolution to be established. The terms are chosen, with deliberate appropriation. They show, that those religious solicitudes, which are too often resolved into fanaticism, or morbid melancholy, were, to the pious compilers of our litany, an object of wise provision, as well as of charitable commiseration.

For the unhappy persons who are last mentioned, there could be but one appropriate petition: that God would be pleased "to raise up them that fall." The significancy of these terms hardly admits of elucidation. Their contrast with the first clause, puts their meaning out of question. For if to stand, is to be in the state of grace, to fall, is to forfeit that state; or, in other words, if to stand, is to enjoy freedom from deadly sin, to fall, is to come under its dominion.

In both these views, the blessing and the calamity are directly opposite to each other ; and, in point of fact, both views unite in one. To stand, is to be supported by divine grace ; and, by that means, habitually to conquer deadly sin : to fall, is to depart from divine grace, and to incur the guilt and bondage of deadly sin.

The strict agreement of this language, with that of the article which has been so often referred to, cannot escape notice. If the term “fall,” in the litany, needed to be explained, the expression in the article of “departing from grace given, and falling into sin,” affords a comment, alike clear and instructive. In this latter instance, it has been already seen, that the case primarily contemplated, is a fall from the “grace given” in baptism. Falling, therefore, from this initiatory blessing, must, in the first instance, have been meant in the litany ; though the petition obviously comprehends all, who have fallen from a state of grace, whether conferred through baptism, or recovered through repentance.

There is a farther correspondence between these two formulas, which deserves attention. The article goes on to say, that, after having fallen, we may, “by the grace of God, rise again and amend our lives ;” implying, that they who have fallen into deadly sin, are incapable of rising again, by any mere exertions of their own. In consonance, therefore, with this important intimation, the litany brings the case of such persons, before Omnipotent Goodness : — “that it may please thee to raise up them that fall.” But here, also, the article throws an instructive light upon the petition, by reminding us, that though, after our fall from the state of grace, we cannot rise again by any power of our own, yet, that neither will God raise us

up, without our own co-operation. While, therefore, the prayer in the litany implores simply that grace, which the article intimates to be indispensable, the language of the latter formula conveys an admonition, that he who desires to be raised by divine power, must, himself, make every effort to rise; and consequently, that, when he feels any movement drawing him to better things, he should instantly embrace the opportunity, and cherish the gracious influence, lest, through despising the goodness of God, which would lead him to repentance, he should be given over to a reprobate mind, and become, as it were, "twice dead; plucked up by the roots."

On the whole, from the entire petition, viewed in connection with the article, it cannot but be concluded, that, in the judgment of the Church of England, every baptized individual must be in one of three states: a state of grace, in which deadly sin is habitually and successfully repelled; a state of sin, in which, grace having been departed from, and temptation yielded to, moral evil has become predominant; or, a state of distressing and dangerous imbecility, from which there is urgent need to emerge, lest, as it may already imply some departure from the state of grace, it may end in an absolute fall into the state of sin. It is also obvious, that, in the view of the church, they who stand, are equally those who have retained the grace of baptism, or who have recovered it by repentance; and that they, who fall into deadly sin, not only forfeit that grace, but must have departed from it, before they could have so fallen. To these conclusions, I say, we are necessarily brought; and their infallible certainty is additionally evinced by this circumstance, that the Church of England, both in the article, and in the litany, has simply adopted those theological

terms, which, through all ages of the Catholic church, had been understood in the same unvaried meaning; and which, even at this day, the church of Rome retains, in a sense radically the same with that, in which they were used by our reformers.

There is another of our public devotional forms, which, I conceive, will be found closely connected with the present subject; though this connection does not seem to have been generally observed: I mean, the prayer of confession, in the commencement of the daily service.

It is not to be doubted, that this impressive form, awakens sentiments of sincere humiliation in many an individual. But it may be questioned, whether it can be joined in "with the understanding," as well as "with the spirit;" or whether the exact ideas, which the words were meant to convey, can be intelligently conceived, except the doctrine of the church, concerning the two states, of grace, and of deadly sin, be known and kept in remembrance.

The acknowledgments of aggravated deviation, with which the confession commences, may probably have, by many, been thought to refer to the early lapse of our nature, and the degeneracy which has ensued. But the import of the expressions is so distinctly practical, that they must be considered as describing the actual conduct of those who adopt them. These, then, it is implied, were once in the ways of God, since they could not have erred and strayed, from ways in which they had never been; nor would they resemble "lost sheep," had they never, in any respect, been "the sheep of God's pasture." That such is the intended meaning, is confirmed, by the petition which is afterwards offered up; "Restore thou them that are penitent." A prayer for restor-

ation, implies a former possession of the state, which it is the object to regain. But it cannot be the state from which our first parents fell, because restoration to paradisaical innocence and happiness, forms no part of the promises here relied upon. It can, in fact, be no other than the state of grace, to which God is entreated to restore the penitent; and why the thing prayed for is, restoration, rather than simple admission, however difficult to explain, if considered unconnectedly, becomes manifest at once, on adverting to the views of the church, respecting the grace of baptism.

But it is worthy of attention, with what wise consideration this confession is adapted, at once to a general, and to a special purpose. It doubtless supposes a lapse from baptismal grace, at one time or other, to be much too common a case; and, therefore, its expressions, from the commencement, are most strictly, though not exclusively, applicable, to that humiliating consciousness. Still, however, the case of those, who are actually in a lapsed state, is distinctly attended to, with a change of language which cannot have escaped observation: "Spare thou them, O God, which confess their faults; restore thou them that are penitent." The substitution of "them" for "us," implies, that all present are not comprehended in these petitions; for had such universality been intended, there would have been no ground for passing, from the first person, to the third. And there is, besides, in the words themselves, a twofold classification, marking an important difference, in the spiritual state of those whom it includes. They who are prayed for in the third person, are such, in general, as, having sooner or later wandered from the way or righteousness, are not yet recovered, yet are become

sensible of their wretchedness, and desire, like the prodigal, to return to their father's house. These, then, may be in one or other of two states : they may be beginning to repent, and to see the evil of their ways ; or they may have a deep feeling of that evil, and be in a state of cordial contrition. An appropriate prayer, therefore, is made for each ; for those who are beginning to repent, it is asked, that they may be *spared*, evidently that they may have time to become completely penitent ; while for those who are really penitent, the petition is, that they may be *restored*, that is, as was already observed, that they may again be placed in that state of grace, which they had forfeited by presumptuous transgression.

As it is impossible to dispute the deep and practical significancy of these discriminating expressions, so neither can we overlook the solicitude, which the injunction of their daily use implies, that they who join in them should exercise continual self-examination, and rest their spiritual safety on nothing, but the conscious possession of the effectual grace of Christ, and the consequent answer of a "good conscience towards God." To be restored, can mean nothing else, than to be, through divine goodness, repossessed of this blessing, after having lost it by falling into sin ; and what is thus seriously and solemnly implored for those, who are supposed to be not only really but sensibly in need, must itself be a substantive and sensible benefit. It can, consistently, be nothing less, than a reinstatement in that remission of sins, sanctification by the Holy Ghost, and conformity to Christ in his death, of which the grace of baptism had been, according to the Church of England, the seminal communication.

The small proportion, however, which these two

sentences of the confession bear to the whole, would seem to intimate the charitable hope of the church, that her children were, for the most part, in happier circumstances, and that, however humbly they were bound to acknowledge past deviations, they might, in general, be regarded as restored to the state of grace, if it had ever been absolutely lost. That such a supposition would be theoretically reasonable, however imperfectly realized in practice, appears from the tenour of the form; its purpose being, to assist, as a means, in raising the whole of each congregation to a state, in which they shall be qualified to please and honour God, by their present offering of praise and prayer, and to proceed, thenceforth, in a pure and holy life. But this would be a groundless reckoning, if the spiritual infidelities which are deplored, were always to continue, and the restoration which is solicited, were never to be effected. It must in reason be allowed, that, while this prime blessing is asked specially, for those who need it, it is asked, not only in humble confidence of its being granted, but also in the cheerful hope, that, when granted, it will never after be forfeited, but, on the contrary, grow into that maturity of Christian virtue, which, in the baptismal service, is described, as "crucifying the old man, and utterly abolishing the whole body of sin."

As this high and holy pursuit is equally the vocation of all, of those recently, or long since restored, as well as of those who are seeking to be so, and not least, of those happy few, whose failures, though real, and, therefore, to be acknowledged and lamented, had not been such as wholly<sup>1</sup> to eradicate the seed

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<sup>1</sup> It seems as if, in drawing up the general confession, our church maintained the opinion expressed by St. Augustine: — "*Paucissimi sunt tantæ felicitatis,*

of spiritual life which they had once received, in the concluding part of the prayer, as relating to this general object, the use of the third person is dropped, and all unite in asking for themselves, in common, what it is impossible for any one individual to be more interested in than another.

To what has been remarked respecting the discriminating language in this prayer, it may possibly be objected, that the most self-abasing expression in the whole, "there is no health in us," is used as descriptive of all. But this sentence cannot have a meaning, which would be at war with the leading object of the prayer, and would stamp the entire form with self-contradiction. It is obvious, that the humiliation, in the former part, is not expressed merely for its own sake, but to lay a ground for the petitions which succeed. The chief matter of these is, that God would restore the penitent, and make that restoration permanent. But it would be absurd in the extreme, to pray for restoration to spiritual health, and for consequent uniformity of Christian temper and conduct, if such spiritual health could never be possessed, and, of course, such temper and conduct never be realised.

It therefore becomes necessary to enquire, whether the acknowledgment, that "there is no health in us," will not admit of a more consistent interpretation? If, then, we observe in what sense the word health was used, when applied to a spiritual purpose, at the same time, and, in effect, by the same persons, we shall find, that it expresses the source, rather than the matter, of internal soundness and comfort. Thus, in

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*ut, ab ipsa ineunte adolescentia, nulla damnabilia peccata committant."* Extremely few, indeed, are so greatly blessed as never from their earliest youth to be guilty of deadly sin.



the prayer-book translation of the 62d Psalm, it is said, "In God is my health;" and, in both translations of the 67th Psalm, God's mercy and blessing, and the light of his countenance, are implored for the church, in order that God's "way may be known upon earth, his saving health unto all nations." It is also worthy of being remarked, that, in the 42d and 43d Psalms, the psalmist is made to call God, the "help of his countenance," by the earlier translators, and "the health of his countenance," by the later.

Having, then, these applications of the term "health" for our warrant, and the tenour of the entire confession for our guide, there is just ground that we should understand this acknowledgment, in the sense given to it by a well-known commentator<sup>1</sup>, above a century ago: "The penitent," he says, "humbly acknowledgeth that there is no health; that is, as the word doth often signify in Scripture, no salvation or means of health, among the sons of men. We can destroy ourselves, but 'in God is our help.' Hos. xiii. 9. 'For no man can deliver himself, nor his brother.' Psalm xlix. 7. 'Salvation alone belongeth unto the Lord.' " Psalm iii. 8.

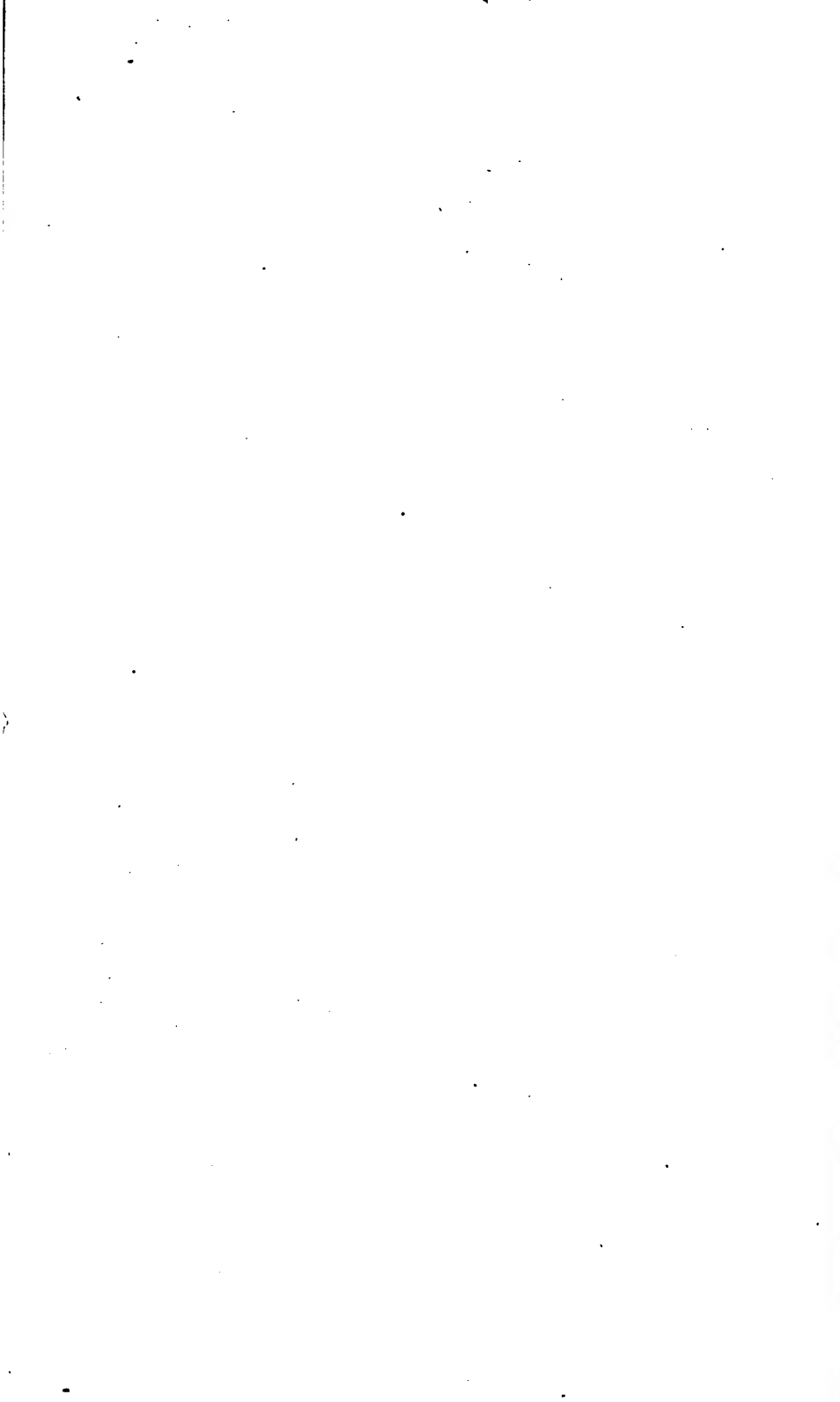
I have only to add, that this meaning specially agrees with the structure of the following sentence, which, it will be observed, is connected with the foregoing sentence, by the adversative conjunction; a form of speech which would much more naturally follow an acknowledgment of utter helplessness, than of utter corruption.

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Comber, D.D. Dean of Durham. The same sense has been given to the words, by Archbishop Secker and others, though with some admission of the more popular interpretation.

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